

BROOKE

AND

BROOKE FARM.

A Tale.

BY

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BROOKE AND BROOKE FARM.

CHAPTER I.

BROOKE AND ITS POLITICIANS.

THERE is not a village in England that I love so well as Brooke: but I was born and have always lived there, and this is probably the reason why I see beauty in it; for strangers do not appear struck with it.

There is one long, straggling street where the blacksmith, the publican, the grocer, and the haberdasher live; their houses being separated, some by gardens, others by cowsheds or pigsties. My father's house stands a little way out of the village, just a quarter of a mile from the "Withers' Arms," the only public-house in the place. Our dwelling stands so far back from the road, and is just so much planted with trees and shrubs, as to be free from noise and dust; while it is not so retired as to appear ashamed of keeping company with the houses in the neighbourhood. The children playing in the road may see the ladies at work in the bow-window

by peeping through the bars of the white gate; and if any little boy should venture in to pick up his ball or recover his kite, he may chance to meet the master looking after his fruit-trees, or to catch a glimpse of the mistress cutting her roses.

Our house is, however, only the second-best in the place, without reckoning Sir Henry Withers's fine old castle, which, besides being five miles off, is too grand to be brought into comparison with any neighbouring estate. Brooke Farm is a far larger and handsomer place than ours. The house, a solid old English mansion with many modern additions, which have been made as its owner, Mr. Malton, grew rich, is approached from the village by an avenue of fine chestnuts; but there are sundry other approaches which are much preferred by those who, like myself, frequent the fields and lanes of Brooke Farm. There is a green lane where wild anemones grow in profusion, and at the end of which, close by the back of the mansion, stand some tall elms, the habitation of a society of rooks. When I go to visit Mrs. Malton, I generally choose this road, and pay my respects to the rookery before doing the same to the lady.—Mr. Malton is by far the largest land-owner within a circuit of many miles, and has added to his property, year by year, till it has become as extensive as he can manage himself. Up to this point he believed himself justified in enlarging his farm, but not beyond; for he knows well that the personal superintendence of the proprietor is

necessary to the due improvement of an estate of any kind, and especially of a farm.

At the west end of the village street stands the church, upon a rising ground planted with evergreens, while the modest parsonage retires behind it, with its little court in front, and its blooming pear-tree trained against the walls. Beyond, are a fine range of fields and some flourishing young plantations; but in my early days they were not to be seen. There was, instead, a wide common, skirted in some parts with very poor cottages. No trees, no gardens were seen around them. I remember how bleak and bare the situation of those dwellings used to appear. A pool of muddy water was before the doors of some, and a dunghill was heaped up against the wall of others. Each had a cowshed, such as it was, with its ragged thatch and its sides full of holes, through which the wind whistled. Each cottager possessed a cow which grazed on the common, and which, though lean from being only half-fed, was the best wealth of its master. As each villager had a right of common, every housekeeper possessed a cow; and often in my evening walk I met eight or nine of these miserable cattle coming home to be milked. Little John Todd, the blacksmith's son, used to drive in several in company with his father's. He took charge of Miss Black's the milliner, of Wickstead's the publican, and of Harper's the grocer. With all these cows, there was no great abundance of milk, butter, and cheese, in the place; for no more milk was yielded than was

wanted for each family. There were tribes of children in most of the cottages ; and the grocer had his shop-boy, the publican his stable-boy, and the milliner her apprentice, to feed ; so that there was a demand for as much milk as the poor animals could supply. A donkey or two, and a few pigs and geese, were also to be seen on the common, grazing or drinking from the pools, or dabbling in them. There was a pretty pond of clear water near the pathway which led across the common ; and it was overhung on one side by a clump of beeches which formed a pleasant shade in summer, and were a relief to the eye in winter when the ground was covered with snow. Behind this clump the common was no longer level, but swelled into heathy hillocks, bright with gorse and broom, and the variety of plants which usually flourish in company with them. The view of the church and parsonage from the highest of these hills was particularly pretty when the setting sun shone full on their windows and on the bench in the churchyard, where the old men used to go to enjoy its last beams. I have sat on that hill for many an hour, watching the children at their sports about the pond, or tending the cows, and have remained there with my father till no sound was heard but the dying hum from a distance, and nothing was to be seen of the village but the sparks from the blacksmith's forge.—My father agrees with me that Brooke is one of the prettiest villages in England.

The character of the place and of the people is, however, very much changed within my re-

membrance;—whether for the better or the worse, the reader will judge for himself when I have described the changes to which I refer. A few years ago, as I have said, the cottages on the common wore a comfortless appearance. The families they contained, some large, some small, were, however, supported in independence, and few complaints were heard, though the children went barefoot and half-naked, and had never thought of such a thing as learning to read. Blacksmiths are always sure of a living; and Mr. Todd was then neither better nor worse off than at present. The same may be said of Wickstead the publican. The grocer has got on in the world considerably; and Miss Black's window displays a much grander assortment of caps and ribbons than in former days. But as she has grown rich, some of her neighbours have grown poor; and parish relief is sought by several families who would have little thought of such a mode of subsistence ten years ago.

I well remember the day when my father announced to us a piece of news which nearly concerned the interests of our village. As we were sitting round the table after dinner, my mother remarked that she had seen Sir Henry Withers ride down the street in the morning, and thought he was going to call; but that just as he had reached the gate, he turned his horse's head another way.

“He came to speak to me on business,” said my father, “and seeing me a little way farther on the road, he chose to overtake me instead of

turning in here. He left his respects for you, and was sorry he had no time afterwards to call."

My mother was sorry too, for she wanted to give him some instructions about rearing a foreign plant which he thought was drooping.

"He will be here again in a day or two," said my father. "If the news he brought has got wind, as I believe it has through his groom, he will scarcely be so well received as usual in the village."

A piece of news being a rare and welcome thing among the inhabitants of Brooke, whether high or low, the whole family party looked eagerly to my father for an explanation. He went on:

"Sir Henry tells me that an act of Parliament is likely to be obtained for inclosing Brooke common."

"O, our pretty common!" cried I. "So we shall see it all divided into patches, with ugly hedges and ditches between. I shall never have any pleasure in walking there again."

"And we must give up playing hide and seek among the hillocks," said one of the boys.

"And there will be no place for me to fly my kite," exclaimed Frederick; "and Arthur must not swim his boat on the pond, I suppose."

"What are the poor people to do with their cows?" added my mother.

"You too, my dear!" exclaimed my father, smiling. "I was going to tell the children that they must not set an example of discontent to their poor neighbours; and now, I am afraid, I must begin my lecture with you."

"You will not need," replied my mother. "I am well convinced that it is right that waste lands should be inclosed: but the first thought which occurred to me was the immediate distress which such a change would cause among the cottagers."

"I am sorry for them," said my father, "because they will be full of alarm, and may, by mismanagement, make that an evil which ought to be none. If they choose, they may be the better for this change. Whether they will choose it is the question."

"That they will be the better in the end, I have no doubt," replied my mother. "But how are they to do without pasture for their cows in the mean time?"

"An allotment of land will be given to each," replied my father, "which may be made much more valuable than the right of common, of which people think so much."

"But, mamma," said I, "you spoke of the common as waste land, just as if it was of no use to anybody. Surely, if it feeds cows for the whole village, and geese besides, it is quite useful enough?"

"Not if it can be made more useful by cultivation, Lucy," said my father. "It is now but poor pasture for a score of cows and a few geese. If it can be made to produce abundant food for double the number of cattle, and some hundreds of human beings besides, we may well call its present condition waste, in comparison with that which will be."

"But it will be very expensive work to bring it to this state," argued I. "How much it will cost to make the fences and prepare the ground before anything will grow in it!"

"That is the affair of those who are going to lay out their capital upon it," replied he. "You may trust them for having made their calculations that they will be repaid in time. If you should see that day, if you live to admire fine fields of corn and valuable plantations flourishing where nothing grows now but heath and broom, you will wonder that you could ever lament the change because it has cost you the loss of a pretty walk."

I was ready to allow that my regret was selfish.

"As for you, children," added my father, turning to the little boys, "it is natural that you should ask about your kite and your boat. I can tell you for your comfort that the pond is not to be touched, and that there will be plenty of room for some years to come for all your sports. The whole common will not be enclosed at once, and the level ground will be taken in first. So you may play at hide and seek among the hillocks till you grow too old for the game."

As we went for our evening walk, we could perceive that there was an unusual stir in the village. Two or three old men, who were always to be seen about sunset sitting on the bench under the elm in front of the public-house, were smoking their pipes very quietly; but more than the usual number of gossips was standing round

them, and the politicians who took the lead in the discussion of the news were holding forth with more than common energy of speech and action.—On one side of the tree two men appeared engaged in an argument less vehement, and to which there were no listeners. One was Sergeant Rayne, who, having spent many years in foreign parts and lost an arm there, had come back, covered with glory, to spend his remaining days in his native village, where he was looked up to as a kind of oracle on account of his superior knowledge of the world. His companion was the grocer, who conceived himself to be little less of a man of the world than Sergeant Rayne, since he had paid three visits to London, and many more to the market town of M——.

I directed my father's attention to this pair of speakers, exclaiming,

“How I should like to know what they are saying! They look as earnest as their neighbours, though they are less noisy.”

“It is easy to see,” replied my father, “that there is speechifying going on on one side of the elm, and argument on the other. I am glad of it, if, as I suppose, they are discussing the inclosure-bill; for I was afraid they were all of one mind, all opposed to it.”

As we passed Miss Black's, we saw her talking at the door with Mr. Gregson, the smart young haberdasher, who was the lady's man of the village. As it was a rare thing for her to condescend to gossip with her neighbours, except at the tea-table, we concluded that she too had

heard the news, and that concern for the interests of her cow had overcome her usual dignity.

We were always sure of hearing the substance and result of every argument which took place within the parish of Brooke, in the space of twenty-four hours at farthest, from a reporter as faithful as he was minute.

Carey the barber, who shaved and dressed my father every morning, would as soon have thought of appearing unprovided with razor and soap as with a report of what passed under the elm the evening before. All that he heard there was told, whether my father listened or not. If left to talk without interruption, he was satisfied with the mere pleasure of talking. If encouraged by observation and reply, he was doubly pleased. He considered that it was his office to speak and my father's to hear, and was resolved that the duty should be thoroughly performed on his part at least. Happy would it be for society if every office were filled with equal zeal and industry!

"I hope, sir," said he, the morning after the occurrences I have related,—“I hope, sir, you enjoyed your walk last evening? Charming evening, sir! I saw you pass as I was with my neighbours at the Arms. Charming evening, indeed!”

“Very pleasant; and I suppose your neighbours found it so, as they did not disperse till late. We were home later than usual, and yet you were all as busy talking when we returned as at sunset.”

" True sir ; very true : though I am ashamed to say I did not see you pass the second time. Yet not ashamed either, for I believe it was quite dark. We had a very animated discussion, sir. We were occupied with a subject of very unusual interest, sir ; though I assure you it did not prevent my observing to Wickstead that I supposed you had gone round by the lanes, as nobody had seen you return. But, as I was saying, sir, if we had remained under the elm till this time, it would not have been very surprising."

He paused to observe whether he had raised my father's curiosity. He was satisfied by the reply :—

" Indeed ! I do not remember that even when the French invasion was expected, any discussion lasted all night. It must be something of high importance indeed."

" It is sir, as you say, something of the utmost importance,—as much as the event you speak of. It is in fact an invasion that we apprehend, sir : an invasion of our privileges, of our rights, which are perhaps as valuable to us as our country itself."

" What can have happened ? " said my father. " You alarm me, Carey."

" I am happy to hear it, sir. The best service which I can render to myself and my friends is to alarm those who have the power to defend our rights. It was agreed last night that as it would be proper to rouse Jowler if your house was attacked, it was now our part to awaken you, sir, to guard our properties. I hope no offence, sir,

in comparing you to Jowler ; but you perceive what we mean ; or rather what Tom Webster means, for it was he that said it, being, as it were, the speaker of the assembly. But I assure you, sir, when your constant anxiety for our welfare was mentioned, we all said ‘ Amen ! ’ so that you perceive no disrespect was meant by the comparison of Jowler.”

“ But let me hear what it is that you ‘ apprehend,’ ” said my father. “ What is this terrible news ? ”

“ It is said, sir, that an Act of Parliament is to be obtained for enclosing Brooke common.”

“ So I have heard,” replied my father, quietly.

“ Then I conclude it is true,” continued Carey ; “ and the only obstacle to our proceeding immediately to action is removed. Our meeting will no doubt be held without delay.”

“ What meeting ? ”

“ I will tell you, sir, briefly what passed last night. As soon as I arrived at the Arms, I heard from Wickstead that Sir Henry Withers’s groom had called in the morning and announced the news of which we are speaking ;—that the common is to be inclosed, and that we are to be deprived in consequence of the right of grazing our cows there.”

“ Without any exchange ? ” inquired my father. “ Without any advantage being afforded instead of it ? ”

“ The groom mentioned none, sir. Sergeant Rayne said, indeed, that in these cases a piece of

land was given to each person instead of the right of common; but we do not know whether it is true. And if it is, what then? What am I, for instance, to do with a bit of land? Only conceive, sir!—Well: we were all of one mind at once, with the exception of Sergeant Rayne, who, between ourselves, has the most extraordinary notions on some subjects. We at once determined to make a stand against oppression; but we should not have known the best method of doing so if it had not been for Tom Webster.”

“Who is he?” asked my father. “I did not know we had a person of that name in the village.”

“No wonder sir, for he has only just arrived—two days ago, I think. He is a cousin of Harper’s,—a very fine young man, but out of health. He lives at M——, and is come on a visit for the sake of country air and quiet. A very fine young man he is, sir, and has seen a great deal of the world. If he stays long enough, I should hope he may infuse much spirit into our meetings, and impart a degree of polish to our society.”

“And what is his advice on the present occasion?”

“That a public meeting should be held, sir, at the Withers’ Arms, and that a petition should be presented to the legislature against the threatened measure. He offered (having been engaged in a public meeting at M——) to prepare and move the resolutions, and proposed that Sergeant Rayne should be invited to take the chair, in case

you, sir, as we feared, should decline doing us the honour of presiding."

"I disapprove the object of such a meeting, and could not therefore preside," said my father.

"We feared so, sir; as the groom said he believed you and his master were both of one mind,—both opposed to our opinions."

"And what says Sergeant Rayne?"

"He too is of the objective school, sir."

"Indeed! And were his objections listened to?"

"We thought it better to defer the consideration of them till the day of meeting. Every one, as Tom Webster says, will then have fair play, be he friend or be he enemy. So we proceeded with our arrangements till the sergeant made a very sensible remark, which put an end to our measures for the time. He observed that we were by no means certain of the fact regarding the common, which was indeed the case. But now, sir, we can proceed on your authority."

"Remember," said my father, "that I know no more than that the act is likely to be obtained, and——"

"True, sir; very true: but we must bestir ourselves now or never."

"Observe also, Carey, that the reason why I do not countenance your meeting is, that I believe it to be for the interest of Brooke and of every person in it that Brooke common should be cultivated."

"Indeed, sir! Well, as Tom Webster says, there is no end to varieties of opinion in this

strange world ; and where there is a difference, discussion is a very good thing."

" I am quite of Tom Webster's opinion there, Carey ; and therefore I shall always be ready to explain the grounds of my opinion to any one who cares to know them ; and I am equally ready to hear any defence of the other side of the question."

" Why, then, if I may ask, sir, do you refuse to attend our meeting ?"

" Because I understood that the object of the meeting is not to discuss the question of inclosing waste lands, but to petition Parliament against the measure in our own case."

" Exactly so. Tom Webster said nothing about a public meeting for the sake of mere argument."

" Probably not. Besides, your evening conversations would answer the purpose as well, every man in Brooke being present, I believe. Only I suppose you are all on one side of the question."

" With the exception of the sergeant, sir ; and he is so quiet, that little could be made out of his opposition."

" His quietness speaks in favour of his opinions to my mind," observed my father ; " for he is not too indolent or too timid to say what he thinks. He is not afraid of standing alone, is he ?"

" O dear, no, sir ! Far from it. He was a brave soldier, and does not know what cowardice is, one way or another. I hope we all approve

frankness and fair play; and therefore, sir, if I have your leave, I will declare to him for his encouragement that you are on his side, and will represent to him, as faithfully as I can, the views which you have done me the honour to explain."

"I was not aware," said my father, laughing, "that I had put you in possession of my views. They are no secret, however, and every one may know them who wishes it."

With a compliment to my father's condescension, the barber withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

GEORGE GRAY'S WAY OF LIVING.

WE happened about this time to want an errand-boy, and looked round among the cottagers' families to see who were the poorest or the most burdened with young children, that we might offer the place where it would be most acceptable. My brothers and I were willing to teach reading and writing to the lad that should be chosen, for there was no chance of his having learned so much beforehand; and my mother hoped she should have patience to bear with the dulness and awkwardness common to most of the children of the village, and to train him to be not only an honest, but an intelligent servant.

My mother went with us one day to the cottage of George Gray, a labourer, who had eight

children, and but small wages to maintain them upon, and who would probably be very glad to send his eldest boy to service.

The children were, as usual, at play near the cottage. Billy, the eldest, was mounted on a donkey, while three or four of the little ones were attempting to drive the animal on by beating him with sticks and bunches of furze.

"Do look at that stupid animal," cried Frederick. "Why does he not canter away with the boy instead of standing to be beaten in that manner?"

"He is heavily clogged," said my mother.

Before the words were spoken, Frederick and Arthur were off at full speed, crying, "Holla! holla! down with your sticks. How can you beat the poor animal so when you see he is clogged, and can't move a step with any one on his back?"

"He'll go well enough sometimes," said one of the children, raising his bunch of furze for another blow.

"Stop!"—cried Arthur. "Don't you see that if he moves a step, down goes his head, and the rider slips off."

One would have thought the donkey knew what was passing; for the next time he was touched, he stooped his head, kicked his hind-feet high in the air, and threw Billy to some distance. Away scampered the tormentors: my brothers laughed, and Willy got up whimpering and ashamed.

Well, Billy," said my mother, "you have

had riding enough for to-day ; and to-morrow you will remember that donkeys cannot run with their legs tied."

We left him hiding his face and rubbing his knees. The eldest girl was sitting on the step of the door, hushing the baby to sleep. Three or four others were making mud-pies just under the dunghill. Hannah Gray, their mother, was in the cottage, setting out the table for dinner : for it was near one o'clock. The potatoes, which formed their daily meal, were boiling on the fire.

In answer to my mother's inquiry how all went on at home, she answered that they were much as usual ; that was, poorly off enough ; for they had many mouths to fill, and but little to do it with. My mother thought that so fine-grown and healthy-looking as the children were, some of them might be able to bring in a little money. Their mother explained that the boys cut firing on the common and drove home the cow, and that Peggy nursed the baby. But she did not see how they could do anything more profitable. They were too young yet to work much, and would have hardship enough, poor things, when they grew up.—My mother believed that children thought it no hardship to be employed, but were proud to be useful, and often found their work as amusing as their play.

" Well, ma'am." said Hannah, " I am sure I do not know what work I could give them that they would like."

" Will you let me try ?" inquired my mother.

"I want a boy to clean the shoes and knives, and weed the flower-garden, and run errands; and I will make trial of your eldest boy, if you choose to let him come."

Hannah dropped a curtsey and looked very thankful, but said she was afraid Billy was not fit to go into a gentleman's family, he was so unmannerly. My mother said she should not make that an objection, if he was a good boy; knowing as she did that those who wish to please soon learn the way.

Hannah declared the boy to be a good boy, and very sharp-witted, considering how little he had been taught. How to get clothes for him, however, she did not know; for the rent had been paid the day before, and she had not a shilling at command. It was settled that he was to be clothed instead of having money-wages at first.

On inquiring into the condition of his clothes, it appeared that he had neither shoes nor stockings.

"I thought, Mrs. Gray," said my mother, "that your children never went to church bare-foot."

"They never did till lately, ma'am; but I cannot afford stockings for so many, nor shoes either; and they do not mind going without, poor things! I was so ashamed, ma'am, and my husband too, the first day they went to church on their bare feet. I thought everybody was taking notice, and I am sure the parson did

when he spoke to us in the churchyard. But it can't be helped."

"I am not quite sure of that," replied my mother. "You know I promised that my housemaid should teach your girls to knit; but you have never sent them."

"Why, ma'am, I am not the less obliged to you; but they have no time, you see. There's the baby to take care of."

My mother looked out of the window and saw three little girls still making mud-pies.

"Why should not they be knitting at this moment," said she, "instead of soiling their clothes and their faces, and learning habits of idleness?"

"Well, to be sure, ma'am, if you think they can learn——"

"Let them try. In another twelvemonth, those three girls will be able to knit stockings for the whole family, and the elder boys might earn their own shoe-leather presently."

George Gray was now seen approaching, talking earnestly with a well-dressed young man. They entered the cottage together.

"Your servant, ma'am," said George. "This is Tom Webster," he added, seeing that Tom looked awkward.

"What is the matter, George?" said his wife, who saw by his face that something disagreeable had happened.

"What is the matter!" cried he, flinging his hat into a corner in a passion. "We are going

to be ruined ; that is what's the matter. Here have I been working as hard as a horse for years, and we have both been pinching ourselves just to be able to feed the children, and now after all we must go to ruin. We must give up our cow ; we must give up our firing : the common is going to be inclosed !”

“ Perhaps not, if we hold a meeting,” said Tom.

“ Nonsense, Tom !” cried George. “ You talk of your meeting ; but what will be the use of all we can say, if the rich men and the parliament have settled the matter between them ? No, no ; the thing is done, and my landlord has got the last rent I shall ever pay.”

Hannah sank down in a chair as she heard these words.

“ I hope you will find yourself mistaken there,” observed my mother. “ Have you heard that, in case of the common being inclosed, a piece of ground will be given to every house-keeper in return for his right of common ?”

“ Surely, George,” said his wife, “ that makes a difference ?”

“ A very great difference,” he replied, “ if the lady be sure of it. I make bold, ma'am, to ask ?”

On being assured of the fact, George turned round upon Tom to ask why he had not mentioned it.

“ Such a promise as that is always made,” said Tom, “ but it is never kept. Besides, if it was, what would you do with a piece of ground ? You could not afford to till it.”

“Leave that to me,” said George, brightening up. “I may find my own ways and means to keep my cow after all: so remember I make no promises about the meeting till I am sure I have heard the whole truth about the common.”

Tom Webster went away, looking a little mortified; and, as it was dinner-time, and the potatoes were ready, my mother also took her leave, advising George not to be hasty in blaming public measures before he knew the reasons of them. George promised this all the more readily for hearing what favours were designed for his boy. Billy was called in to receive his first lesson in good manners, and to hear what brilliant fortune was in store for him. He was to get himself measured by the tailor and shoemaker, and to make his appearance the next Monday morning.

Instead of turning homewards, we prolonged our walk through the lanes to a considerable distance.

When we entered the village, we observed as great a bustle in the street as if it had been the day of the much-talked-of meeting. A crowd was slowly making its way along the middle of the street. At first we thought it was a fight; but there was no scuffling, no rocking of the group backwards and forwards as in a fight, no giving way and closing again as if there was fear of any object within. Before we were near enough to see or hear, Sir H. Withers's carriage came along the street, and the crowd being obliged to give way to let it pass, we saw in the

midst a ballad-singer—a youth with tattered dress and a bundle of papers. As the carriage passed, he raised his voice in song, as if to catch the ears of the coachman and footman who were looking back from the box. Ballad-singers and ballads were sufficiently rare at Brooke to justify their curiosity. They soon heard what made them long to stop and hear more, as they no doubt would have done if the carriage had been empty. The singer bawled after them in something like music,

'Twill be all a humbug
To talk of deprivations,
When the pheasants roost snug
In Sir Harry's new plantations.

“It is about Sir Henry Withers!” cried my brothers; and they were running off to hear more, when my mother called them back and bade them walk quietly beside her, and wait till they got home, to hear the rest of this beautiful song. We were favoured with another verse, however, when the ballad-man saw that we were fairly within hearing. It ran thus:

Let your babes cry with cold,
For the turf it is sold,
And the cows are all gone.—Why, you blockhead !
Fire and food are but trash,
So they're now turned to cash,
And they dangle in Malton's big pocket.

Just as the last quaver on the big pocket died away, we turned into Miss Black's shop, where I wanted to make a purchase.

Miss Black appeared from an inner room with her usual trailing curtsey, her everlasting brown silk gown, black silk apron, mits on her hands, and scissors at her girdle. The only variation ever observed in her indoor dress was in the cap, which changed its make and the colour of its ribbons every month: the reason of which was, that she wished to be neither in the front nor in the rear of the fashion, and therefore adopted the youngest but one of the fashions for her own. Perhaps this was on the same principle which leads some tender mannnas to pet the youngest but one of their tribe, feeling that it is unjust to discard it in favour of a newer, while it is not quite able to take care of itself. Miss Black reaped the reward of thus bestowing her patronage where it was wanted; for she looked so well in whatever she wore, (from her manner of wearing it,) that her last month's stocks sold off among the farmers' families, within a few miles, who could aspire to nothing in the way of dress beyond looking as genteel as Miss Black.—In one respect she did not look like herself this day. There was a shade of care on her brow such as I had never seen before, but on occasion of the illness of a favourite apprentice, and once besides, when there was a report of a change in the silk-duties, and she could not make out whether it would be for her advantage or not. Her private anxieties, however, did not impair her civility to her customers, and she began,—

“Great revolutions in these days, ma'am, both in public and private. I am sure I hope Billy

Gray will be as sensible as we could wish of his good fortune."

My mother, laughing, inquired how this piece of domestic news could have travelled so far already. The matter had not been mentioned till two hours before.

"So I understand, ma'am. But Mr. Webster carries news fast, as he has nothing else to do, you know. It was he who told somebody at the bar of the Arms, where Mr. Gregson's boy was at the time, and Mr. Gregson just stepped across to tell me.—Not quite broad enough, miss? I am afraid I have not any of the same shade of any other breadth. but perhaps you are not exact about the shade.—Great revolutions as I was saying, madam." And she sighed.

"Have you taken the alarm too about the common?"

"As to alarm, ma'am, I hardly know what to say, for I do not wish to meddle in politics, and am not clear on the point. But I really am perplexed; for do you know, ma'am, I have had Mr. Webster and Mr. Carey both with me to say that, as the owner of a cow, I must be present at their meeting either in person or by proxy; and you know, ma'am, nothing is so injurious to a business like mine as taking any part in public affairs. On the other hand, these gentlemen assure me that silence will be construed as an affront to the public of this place. If I could only make out how to avoid offending any party—Three yards and a half, miss?

Thank you. Three yards and a half.—Then there is another circumstance, ma'am, which I am not afraid to mention to *you*. Mr. Webster assured me so positively that cockades would be worn at the meeting to mark the opposite parties, and he told me so particularly what the colours would be, that I did not hesitate to write to M — to order ribbons: and now Mr. Carey insists upon it that there will be no cockades; so that I am quite at a loss whether or not to countermand my order. He says that laurel will be worn by one party and oak by the other; but he does not even know whether there is to be gold-leaf. Now really, this being the day that I must write to M——, I am quite perplexed." And she looked inquiringly at my mother, who asked her whether she was sure there would be any public meeting at all. This new doubt was very astonishing to Miss Black; but it determined her to countermand the ribbons; and she heaved a deep sigh when the matter was settled, as if a heavy load was removed from her mind.

Carey waylaid us at the door, under pretence of a necessary inquiry, but evidently for the purpose of finding out whether we had heard the ballad. While talking about it, he smirked, and rubbed his hands and checked himself so strangely, as to excite some suspicions in my mother's mind concerning the authorship. She remarked that it was astonishing that the people at M—— should take so much interest in the affair as to print songs about it, and send somebody to sing

them to us. Carey observed that ballad singers were always ready.—But this man, my mother was sure, was not a regular ballad-singer. Indeed! who was he then?—If my mother might guess, he was a gipsy, hired by some village poet; and that poet she fancied might be Mr. Carey.

Carey smiled, and fidgeted more than ever, while he pretended to disclaim the honour, and vowed that he never wrote a whole song in his life except on wedding occasions; and talked a great deal about his professional avocations, and the muses, and his desire at the same time to guide the public mind, &c.

My mother replied, that, as to the honour, there was none in stringing rhymes, unless they had reason in them; and that she hoped that before he and Webster composed their next joint production, they would make sure that they were “guiding the public mind” in the right track. She urged his calling in the remaining stock of ballads, but he was ready with the answer, that every one was sold. This fact and the pleasure he felt in becoming known to us as a poet, supported his self-complacency under my mother’s mortifying remarks; and he looked as smiling as ever when he made his parting bow and tripped away to his shop.

His reports of the conversations under the elm continued for some days to be very interesting. Tom Webster bustled and declaimed, while Sergeant Rayne quietly argued. The light and giddy sung the ballad daily and hourly when

they had once caught the tune ; while the grave and thoughtful weighed the pros and cons of the argument till they had made up their minds. It was finally agreed that no petition should be sent to parliament. In reply to the angry remonstrances of the orators, some declared that it was too late ; others that it would be of no use ; some said that it was a folly to suppose that the poor could hold out against the rich ; others, that as Sir H. Withers and Mr. Malton had always been kind landlords and good men, they ought to be trusted now. Some few declared that, from all they could learn, it seemed to them that the measure of inclosing the common would be of service to the interests of the village.

CHAPTER III.

GEORGE GRAY IN THE WAY TO PROSPER.

ONE fine September morning, on returning from a ride with my father and Frederick, I was surprised to see from a distance what an animated scene our common presented. There were groups of children ; but they were not flying their kites. There were many women ; but they were neither cutting furze, nor tending their cows. Men were arriving from all sides, seeming disposed to see what was going forward, rather than to sit down to dinner at home.

We put our horses to a canter, and soon arrived at the scene of action. The people were observing the motions of the surveyors, who, accompanied by Sir H. Withers and Mr. Malton, were settling the boundaries of the land to be inclosed. The variety of countenances plainly declared how various were the feelings with which the proceedings were viewed. I was myself so sorry that the time was come when ugly hedges and ditches must spoil the beauty of my favourite walk, that I could not wonder at some of the lamentations I heard around me, or at the sour looks with which the strangers were regarded.

"It's a fine thing," said one, "to be a baronet. It's a fine thing to have one's own way with parliament, and to do as one likes with land that belongs to people who can't defend their right to it."

"It's a fine thing to be a great farmer," cried another. "There's Mr. Malton, who has so much land that it takes him hours to ride through it—he is able to get as much more as he likes because he is rich. Parliament never asks whether the land he wants belongs to anybody else, or whether he has not enough already; but as soon as ever he wishes for more, he gets it."

"Remember that he pays for it," said a neighbour. "He takes no unfair advantage of anybody. You have no reason to complain, for you have no right of common; and if we who have choose to exchange ours for a bit of

land, what is that to anybody but ourselves? I say it is very wrong in you to make your neighbours discontented without reason."

"You say so," retorted the other, "because you hope to get work under the surveyors. I hear you have hired yourself out as a labourer already, and I wonder you choose to have any thing to do with such a business. If my boy had the offer of work on this spot to-morrow, he should not take it."

"Then somebody would soon be found to take it instead," replied the neighbour. "It will be a happy chance for many of our labourers; and I do not believe anybody will be the worse in the end for Mr. Malton's being richer."

"How should that be, if he takes the money out of our pockets!"

"That is the very thing that I deny. I say he puts money into our pockets in return for our labour; and out of the ground and our labour together, he gets back more money than he paid to us. So that he grows richer without making us poorer."

When we joined the gentlemen who were talking with the surveyors, Mr. Malton was observing that he was sorry, but not very much surprised to remark how much discontent existed among the people on account of this new proceeding.

"One cannot expect," said Sir Henry Withers, "that they should look forward beyond the present inconvenience to the future profits in which they will share with us. All that they think

about now is, that their cows cannot feed where they have fed; but if they could see how, in a hundred years, a multitude of their descendants will be supported by the produce of your fields, and how the value of the land will be increased by my plantations, they would wonder at their own complaints."

"They will not trouble you much, Sir Henry," replied Mr. Malton. "You and your ancestors have always been allowed to take your own way in this neighbourhood. It is with me that they are the most angry; but I can bear it because I see where the mistake lies, and that time will explain it. It is natural enough that men should like being proprietors better than being labourers; and because I laid several small fields into one farm, they fancy I have injured the former proprietors; though they would find, if they chose to inquire, that the very men who were starving on land of their own, are now flourishing on the wages I give them. Now, in times like these, the friends of the people will think more about how to satisfy their wants than to flatter their pride."

Frederick and I looked at one another, wondering how it could happen that a man should be richer without land than with it; but as my father seemed to agree with Mr. Malton, we supposed there was something more in the matter than we saw. My desire to understand the opinions of the gentlemen made me attend to whatever was said this morning or at any future time on the subject of this important inclosure. I

had many opportunities of learning what my father's opinions were and why he held them; for it was a common practice with his neighbours to come to him for advice when they were in doubt, as well as for assistance when they had need. On the present occasion, so much of his time was taken up in arguing, explaining, and advising, that he jokingly said he thought he must call the inhabitants together to hear a lecture, or conduct a public disputation. My own convictions, from all that I heard, were, that no man can be properly regarded as an enemy to the public who so manages his capital as that it may produce the largest returns, whether that capital consists of ten thousand acres, with droves of cattle and spacious granaries, or of half an acre with a single pig. If a man obtains his property by fair purchase, and makes it produce the utmost that it can, he is a friend to the public as well as to himself and his family; since production is the aim of all such management, and the interest of every individual in the society. I therefore looked on the baronet as a public benefactor when I saw him planting his pines, beeches, and alders here, and his oaks and chestnuts there; because I knew that a vast increase of capital would be the result. I looked on Mr. Malton as a public benefactor when I saw him draining and manuring his new land; because I foresaw that these tracts would afford food and work to hundreds of a future generation. I looked on every labourer as a public benefactor who put his wages out to increase,

either on his slip of garden-ground, or in improving the condition of his cow and pigs, or in the Savings Bank. Every man who assists the accumulation of cattle is a public benefactor, because he improves the fund for the employment of labour, and adds to the means of human subsistence and comfort. It was now George Gray's turn to try what he could do for society by improving his own condition. He was now a capitalist; and it remained to be seen whether he could, by prudence in the outlay and by saving, make his capital accumulate.

On the Monday morning he brought his boy Billy, according to appointment, to take the lowest place among our domestics. The lad was much abashed at being shown into the parlour; and being besides rather sorry to leave his brothers and sisters, and much encumbered with his shoes and stockings and other new clothes, he turned very red, twirled his hat round and round, shifted from one leg to the other, and at last, on being spoken to, began to cry. His father told him he ought to be ashamed of himself for crying before the ladies; but that only made the matter worse. My mother, wisely supposing that the best way to stop his tears was to give him something to do, took him into the garden and shewed him how to weed the flower-beds. His father did not immediately take his leave, but said that he wished to consult his Honour on a matter of some importance, if his Honour had time to listen to him.

My father laid down the newspaper and was ready to hear.

"I believe you know, sir, that every body who keeps a cow on the common is offered a bit of land in exchange for the grazing and fuel?"

"Half an acre each, I understand, Gray."

"Yes, sir. Half an acre each; and we may have it at the back of our cottages, or farther on the common, whichever we like."

"So I hear; and you may sell it to Mr. Malton, on fair terms, if not inclined to keep it."

"There is another person too, sir, who has offered me the same price as Mr. Malton; and I think, being a friend, he should have it if I sell it at all. My neighbour Norton has a mind to begin upon a farm of his own; and this, to be sure, is his time, when land may be had cheap."

"I hope he will take care what he is about," replied my father. "He is doing very well now, I believe. Why cannot he be satisfied without running risks?"

"Why, sir, he has saved money for the first outlay upon the land; and I suppose he understands his business very well, having practised it so long on Mr. Malton's ground. And you know every body likes to be an owner as soon as he can."

"Many a proprietor would be glad to be a labourer again, in times like these," said my father; "and I wish Norton may not feel that by and by. However, that is his own concern, and

neither you nor I have any business with it. Do you mean, then, to sell your allotment to him?"

"That is what I wished to consult your Honour about. Harper told me yesterday that he has settled his bargain already with Mr. Malton, and that you approved of it; but I hear this morning that you have advised one or two of my neighbours very differently."

"I have given different advice where the cases were different, and I have always mentioned my reasons, so that my neighbours might have the power of judging for themselves. If you know my reasons, you can easily guess what I should recommend in your case."

"I did not hear, sir, why you advised them as you did; and I supposed that what was good for one would be good for all."

"By no means, Gray, till all are rich or poor alike, and otherwise circumstanced in the same way. A shopkeeper, like Harper, may find it convenient to have a cow, while he is at no expense for it beyond building a shed and paying a trifle for having her driven home, and at no trouble but having her milked; but it becomes a very different matter when he must cultivate a piece of ground to provide food for her. His time is taken up with his business, and he knows nothing about the management of land; so that he must employ labourers; and the utmost profit of a cow would not repay him for this. I think, therefore, that he and our other shop-

keepers have done wisely in selling their land and their cows."

"But you think, sir, that Sam Johnson should keep his half-acre?"

"Yes. I think he is in favourable circumstances for making it answer; and I have advised him to get another cow, if those of his neighbours who are without will agree to take milk of him. Johnson's wife knows how to conduct a dairy; his children are growing strong enough to give him help in his tillage; and being a labourer, he has many hours at his own command which a shopkeeper has not. So, if he works hard and manages cleverly, I think he will make a good profit of his allotment; and so may you, for the same reasons."

"Would you have me sell milk, sir?"

"No. I should think one cow and a couple of pigs are enough to have on your hands, as your children are young, and your wife much occupied with them. But milk is an article of so much importance in a large family, and the produce of a cow such a comfortable thing to depend on, that I am always glad to see a labourer able and inclined to make the most of it."

"I have often thought, sir, that there was no telling what would have become of us if it had not been for our cow."

"You will find her of much more use to you when she is properly fed. Her milk will be twice as good and twice as plentiful when her

food is raised from your own land ; especially if your wife knows how to manage her."

" Pray," inquired my mother, who had just entered the room, " has your eldest girl learned to milk and churn ?"

" Why no, ma'am ; but I think it is time she should. She might help her mother much that way."

" Indeed she ought ; and if you like to let her come here at milking-time, our dairy-maid shall teach her to milk. Very few people are aware how much the value of a cow depends on the skill of the milker."

Gray bowed, and thankfully accepted the offer.

" I believe, sir," he said turning to my father, " that I shall keep my bit of land, or part of it. But I shall want a little money, you know, to lay out upon it at first ; and I have no means of getting that but by selling a part."

" It seems a pity to sell," said my father, " because as your boys grow up, you will be able to make a profit of the whole, perhaps. I am not sure, either, that you will want money at all. I will come down to your cottage and see the condition of the land and of the place altogether, and give you my opinion upon it."

When Gray was gone, my father and mother agreed that it was a good opportunity of trying what could be done for the welfare of a large and very poor family by clever management on their side, encouraged by advice and counte-

nance on ours. We hoped to improve their condition, without either lending or giving them money ; and they were industrious and tolerably prudent, and we ourselves much interested for them. My father was not a man to forget his promises, or to keep his neighbours waiting for the performance of them. The same evening we directed our walk towards Gray's cottage.

The ground was declared to be of a promising quality, and was conveniently situated behind the cottage. It was Gray's intention to fence it immediately, and turn in his cow to bite off the grass and help to manure it. But the great difficulty was to feed his cow through the winter, as his own land would not be ready for many months, and the small pickings from the lanes and hedges would go but a little way. My father promised to consider the matter ; and went on to examine the state of every part of Gray's premises. The cowshed was in bad repair. There were holes large enough to admit the wind and rain : the floor was wet and uneven, and not paved, as the floors of all cowsheds ought to be. My father showed Gray the advantage of having the ground slope a little, and told him how easily he might manage to pave it with stones (which are to be had every where), and to mend the thatch with heath and furze from the common. He advised that a pit should be dug near the shed, and close by where the future pigstye was to be, to collect the manure ; and that the sweepings from the cottage floors,

the collections which the children might make from the roads, and the wash and boilings of all sorts, should be thrown into it to increase the stock. Gray seemed willing to receive and act upon all his advice, especially when he found there was no need at present to lay out money upon his land. He declared that he did not grudge labour, nor care how hard he worked, if he could have a fair prospect of bettering his condition.

"Such a prospect I think you have," observed my father, "if you really do not mind hard work. But we have laid out a good deal for you. Here you have, besides your regular work, to fence your ground, and repair your shed, in the first place; and I should not wonder if you must pay for the subsistence of your cow this winter by extra labour."

"I should be very glad to do so, sir, rather than part with her; and by this time twelve-month, perhaps, I may see my way before me better than I do now."

"Indeed I hope you will, Gray; and then we shall see you living upon something better than potatoes. Potatoes are very good food in part; but I like to see a hard-working man enjoying his bread and beer, and sometimes a dish of meat. If you manage to keep a pig, this will be in your power. In the mean time, do not be uneasy about how your cow is to be fed this winter. She will have the range of the common for two months to come; and I advise you to

get on with your fencing and repairs before that time is over."

My father represented to Mr. Malton the difficulty of the cottagers about keeping their cows through the first winter. The number of these animals was very small, as most of the villagers had sold theirs to the neighbouring farmers; and, as the common was to be open for some time, and a bite of grass was to be had in the lanes, the quantity of turnips required for the cattle would not be great. It happened too that Mr. Malton wanted more labourers on his new land than he could easily obtain; so that the wages were somewhat raised, and he was glad to employ all who were willing for a greater number of hours in the day. It was presently settled, to Gray's great satisfaction, that he should pay for the feed of his cow by two hours' extra work per day, as long as Mr. Malton could so employ him.

CHAPTER IV.

A CONVERSATION UNDER THE LIMES.

SERGEANT RAYNE was a happy old man. Every body loved him for his kindness of heart, and looked up to him with respect for the simplicity of his character, and for the wisdom he

had gained by his travels abroad and his meditations at home. The labourers of the village were always ready to stand and chat with him when he had inquiries to make about their families. The housewives invited him in as he passed their doors, and wiped down a chair for him. The children brought him nosegays as he sat beneath the elm; and it was his delight to take one on his knee and collect the others round him, while he told long stories of his adventures on land and sea. It was amusing to witness the eagerness of the little creatures—one holding his face between both her hands lest he should look away before the tale was ended,—another crowding question upon question faster than they could be answered—a third uttering an impatient “hush!” at each interruption. He allowed them to do what they liked with him; and one little rogue used to creep up behind him on the bench to peep into the pocket which sometimes contained apples and nuts, while another amused himself with buttoning and unbuttoning the empty sleeve which the sergeant was wont to consider his most honourable badge of service. When my mother and I went to a shop, we often found him seated beside the counter, reading the news to two or three listeners; and more frequently, as we passed through the churchyard, he was to be seen on the bench in the lime walk, with spectacles on nose, intently reading one of the good books which he valued more than newspapers, chat, or child’s-play, dearly as he loved them all. When so engaged,

no one interrupted him, and he took notice of nobody but the clergyman, to whom he never failed to offer his best bow. They usually entered into conversation on the subject of his reading or on the results of his meditation; and the clergyman has more than once told me that he owes to Sergeant Rayne many a topic for a sermon, and many a hint which he afterwards found valuable in his intercourse with his flock.

On one occasion, he conversed as freely with me as if I had been the clergyman. His spirit was moved, and it was a relief to him to express his feelings where he knew he might look for sympathy.

He was sitting in the churchyard, one bright, mild noon of a late autumn day. He had been reading, but had put down his book with his finger between the leaves, while he watched the motions of the sexton who was digging a grave near him. When he heard the rustling of my little dog among the fallen leaves, he turned and saw me approaching from the stile. I thought there was a look of invitation in his eye; and when he brushed a few dead leaves from the bench, I took my seat beside him.

"That grave is for old John Williams, I suppose?" said I.

"It is; and I was just grieving in myself that he who is about to be laid there should have gone down to the grave in sorrow, after a life of usefulness and honour."

"You mean on account of the ill-doing of his son Hal?"

"Yes, miss: and not only that, but of the change in the family altogether, and of the difference in their prospects from what his were at their time of life. I remember what a happy family they were fifteen years ago, when he owned his little farm here in the neighbourhood. His sons in the field and his daughters in the dairy were as fine a set of lads and lasses as could be seen. And now to think how some are dead and others dispersed, and the favourite of all likely to come on the parish through his own imprudence,—it does make one's heart ache."

"And the poor old man himself," said I, "was supported by the parish during his time of infirmity."

"Yes, miss; and that of itself would have brought him to the grave if his childishness had not saved him that pain. He deserved better from his favourite son than that he should marry before he could afford it, and turn over his old father to be maintained by the parish."

"Did you ever tell the young man so?"

"Why, miss, I thought if his own natural affections and sense of duty were not enough to guide him, there was little use in my saying any thing. But this much I did tell him: that I had more pleasure in making my old mother comfortable with my pay than I could ever have had in indulging my own wishes; and that I am happier in my old age without wife or children than I could have been under the thought that she had died in the workhouse."

“ And what did he say ? ”

“ He smiled and said I had never been in love ; but—— ” the old man sighed and shook his head.

“ I am afraid,” said I, “ Hal has not much comfort in his wife ; for they seem to have gone down in the world sadly since they married.”

“ True, miss : and the old man knew this before he died ; for he became sensible both of this and of his son Richard’s death. Richard, you know, miss, was a seaman, and was supposed to be at the other side of the world at this time ; but a week ago, a letter came to say that he was dead ; and it enclosed twelve pounds, which he had saved from his pay and left to his aged father. I told Williams all about it, and shewed him the letter and the money ; but his memory so failed him, that he did not know who I was speaking of ; and he forgot the whole the next minute. But O ! miss, it all came back upon him at the last ; and I shall ever bless God that I heard him speak rationally once more. He grew weaker every hour ; and there he sat crying and wailing like a child, or talking so foolishly that one did not know how to answer him. But I have heard him speak like a man again, as sensibly as ever in his life, and with far more dignity than his son knew how to face.”

“ It is a great consolation,” said I, “ when the mind which has been long clouded becomes clear at the last.”

“ A great consolation, miss ; and never so

much to me as in this case. He was too weak to be got up, the last morning; and when I went, he was either asleep or so quiet that we thought him so. I offered to sit by him till his son came from work; and I was reading in the armchair by the bedside when he raised his head and said, quite in his natural voice, 'Is that you, sergeant?' I saw at once that he was quite sensible. He asked who that woman was at the fire; and when I told him it was his daughter-in law, Ann, his son Hal's wife, he repeated the words to himself, and mused for a while, and then asked for Hal. Hal came in at the moment, and his father spoke to him as if they had not met for years. 'So you are married, Hal,' said he, 'and I did not know it till now. Well, that is no fault of yours. But where's Richard now? Has he been to see us, and I did not know that either? O, but surely I remember something about him. Did not you tell me, sergeant, that he died? My poor son! But he only went a little while before me.' And so he ran on till we told him he had better not exhaust himself with talking, and I drew the curtain that he might try to sleep again. He lay very quiet till his son and daughter left the room; and then, opening the curtain, he beckoned me close to him, and said he was sure I would tell him the truth, and that he wanted to know whether Hal was not very, very poor, as he observed that the best furniture was gone, and that the room looked comfortless. I could not deny that they were poor. He went on to

ask how they had supported him ; and his look and manner were so earnest, and he did so insist upon his right to be told the whole, and it was so clear that he had some notion of the parish allowance, that I could not keep the fact from him. As soon as he had made out that he had been a burden on the parish, he turned away and hid his face under the clothes. I did not, for some time, venture to take any notice ; but at last I said, as gently as I could, that there would never again be such a necessity, as he was now well supplied with money. He soon recalled the circumstance of his son Richard's legacy, and then made me tell him how many weeks he had received an allowance from the parish. ' Forty-nine weeks, at four and sixpence a week ; how much is that ? More than I can pay, I am afraid. But I can't reckon it ; will you ?—Eleven pounds and sixpence, is it ? Well, I am thankful I have the money ; and I beg, sergeant, you will write a letter from me to the overseers,—now, before Hal comes in. Sit by me, and I'll tell you what to say.' So, miss, he told me clearly what he wished me to say ; and his letter was so proud and yet so humble ! He said he hoped he could submit to be a burden at the last, if it should be God's will ; but that he had never intended to be so, and would not while he could raise a shilling by other means ; and so he begged to send back all they had allowed him. Hal looked surprised and vexed, when he came back, to hear what had been done ; and he whispered to me that I knew very

well how long his father had been superannuated, and that he hoped I should not fling away the money in any such manner, though it was very well to humour the old man by pretending to do as he wished. I made no answer, but I have the money and the letter safe, and they shall go to-night; for my good friend was as much in his right mind as you or I, miss; and more, I should say, than his son Hal. 'There is but little left, Hal,' said he; 'but it will be more than I shall want; for I am just going. I wish I could have left you something more than my love and thanks for what you have done for me. I am afraid I have been a sad trouble to you; but good children find all this trouble turned into pleasure when they look back upon it in after times.' He went on speaking for some time; but his speech became less clear and his countenance altered, till he sunk back and breathed his last. I have thought of little else, ever since, Miss Lucy; and between joy to think how he recovered himself after being so long childish, and sorrow that he will never speak to me again, my heart is quite full still."

The sergeant seemed so much affected, that I tried to divert his attention by inquiring into the beginnings of poor William's troubles.

"Why, miss, he and I were never agreed about matters of that kind. I always took a different view of his difficulties from what he did; and I should have tried a different way to get out of them. As soon as the war ended, his

reverses began; and like all the rest of the farmers, he complained of the hardships of the agricultural classes, and that they had not fair play. It was of no use my reminding him that the farmers made enormous profits during the war, which could not in the nature of things be kept up for any long time: he was still crying out for higher duties on the importation of corn, and complaining of the prosperity of manufactures; just as if the welfare of the one class did not depend on that of the other. Then Mr. Malton's taking several farms into his own hands was a great grievance to him. When I saw what was doing, I advised him to keep no more land than he had capital to make the most of, and to send his children into the world, or let them provide for themselves under Mr. Malton; but he would do no such thing. So, from keeping more land than he could cultivate properly, his capital was returned in less and less proportions, and he went down in the world, and his children with him, till ruin overtook most of them."

"It seems a hard thing," said I, "that these large farmers should ruin their humbler neighbours; and why need it happen now more than formerly?"

"Changes are always going on in society, Miss Lucy, and there are usually some who suffer, and many who are benefited by these changes. Whenever such a change takes place, we hear a cry in favour of old times, and complaints that we do not go back to the old ways. But, to say nothing of the good or evil of old

ways, is it possible to go back to them? In the present case, for instance, is it possible to set back our population, our manufactures, our modes of tilling the ground, to what they were when small farms were not found fault with? Certainly not: so the question comes to this:—having a multitude more mouths to feed, and requiring more and more capital to make the ground yield its utmost, is it wiser to obtain an increased production by changing our farming system, or to let the poorer population starve, that a certain class may continue to be landed proprietors who cannot properly afford to be so?"

"It is clear," replied I, "that the general good must be considered before the indulgence of any particular class. But to whom is this question referred?"

"That is another point to be considered, miss. All these great questions are decided by the public interest, (unless some meddling law is interposed,) and not by individuals. As long as more corn is wanted, there is no use in railing at large farmers, or at those who buy of them, or at anybody. The demand cannot be prevented, and the supply will follow of course. Seeing all this, I could not be discontented with Mr. Malton for improving his land and trying new methods by which more corn was brought to market and at a cheaper rate than formerly; though I was sorry for Williams and others who could not keep up with him. My poor old friend never could agree with me there; nor

could he hear with patience of the inclosure of our common. He was always afraid of too much corn being grown, and would never believe that the more food is raised, the more would be wanted."

"Did he not see that a multitude in this kingdom have not food enough?"

"That, miss, he could not dispute; but his argument was, that while farmers are poor, there must be too much corn in the market. I never could get him to tell me why, if that were the case, Mr. Malton and others were busy enlarging their farms and taking in waste land."

"That is what I was going to ask," said I. "How can Mr. Malton afford to lay out a great deal of money which the land cannot pay back for years, if the business of farming is an unprofitable one?"

"He knows very well that whatever may be the changes of prices and the rise and fall of profits at various times, there will be a lasting demand for the produce of the soil; and that therefore landed property, with a sufficiency of capital to lay out upon it, must be a safe and lasting possession in the long run. For that long run he, as a large capitalist, can afford to wait."

"Then it is an advantage to the public whom he supplies, and to the labourers whom he supports, as well as to himself, that he should carry on the work he has begun?"

"Certainly. He is preparing to feed many hundred human beings where only a few lean cattle grazed before. He circulates money now

among his poor neighbours whom he pays for making his inclosures. They are very glad of their increase of wages, (as you may see if you go among them,) however much they may mourn over the loss of their common. This winter he will turn' in his large flocks of sheep to bite every blade of grass and manure the ground. In the spring he will plough up the land, and afterwards sow it with turnips. Next winter, his sheep will feed off the turnips and give the land another dressing; and, during all this time, he is laying out a great deal of money on his fields without any other return than the scanty feed of his flocks. But, after this time, his land will begin to pay him back the expense of the purchase, of the fences, of the use of the teams, of the seed, and of the human labour which has been employed; and when it is improved to the utmost, he will probably find, or his children after him, that it is well worth while thus to employ his capital, and thus to wait for his profits."

"If, for many years," said I, "there has been less food in this country than was wanted, how happens it that so many commons are still uninclosed?"

"Because it often answers better to improve land already cultivated than to spend money on wastes. Of late years, agriculture has been much studied in this country, and means have been discovered by which lands that have been under the plough for hundred of years have been made to produce more by half than in old times. This

is the way that Mr. Malton grew rich. If there had been nothing more to be done with his fields than formerly, he would probably have taken in the common some years ago: but his time and money have been occupied in trying new methods of cultivation, which have answered very well and enabled him to increase his capital, notwithstanding the badness of the times, from which he was no more exempt than other people. Having brought his estate into a high degree of cultivation, he is now able to add to it."

"And to fix his capital," said I, "and wait for returns in a way which is not practicable for a small capitalist. Poor Williams, if he had been alive now, must have had his capital reproduced immediately or have been at a stand."

The sergeant smiled while he observed that he saw he was not the only person who had conversed with me on the employment of capital. I told him how often I had listened to conversations between my father and his friends on the philosophy of the changes which were taking place in our village.

"There is another way," said I, "in which it seems to me easy to prove that there is the best economy in large farms. If industry is limited by capital, and if a capital grows faster in proportion to its increase, a large capital must afford increased employment at a quicker rate than several small ones. Do you see what I mean?"

"Yes, miss; and I think you perfectly right. Here is a case. Mr. Malton began, we will say,

with a farm of three hundred acres, and three neighbours with each a farm of one hundred, his capital being just equal to that of the three together. Mr. Malton would have the advantage, in the first place, of having his capital better invested. His one set of farm buildings would require less fixed capital than their three sets, though his might be treble the size. * His fencing and the disposal of his fields might be managed to better advantage. He might proportion his stock and instruments more exactly than they could to the work to be performed—finding, for instance, that five horses could do the work which it would require a pair of horses on each of the three small farms to do. The fixed capital thus saved, Mr. Malton could employ at once in improving his land, and thus preparing for a further increase of capital; while his neighbours could only go on as they did before. When these improvements bring in their profits, he has a further sum to lay out in the employment of labour, and the fruits of that labour enrich him still more; and all this time, his three neighbours are left further and further behind, though their smaller capital may be growing in its due proportion. At the best, at the end of a few years, they can only make the most of their one or two or three hundred acres, while he supplies society with the produce of his one or two or three thousand."

"Do you know," I asked, "with how much land Mr. Malton began the world, and how much he has now?"

"I rather think he began upon six or seven

hundred acres ; and now he has some thousands under his own eye. One of his tenants holds a farm of fifteen hundred, and another of twelve hundred acres ; and these men adopt all Mr. Malton's improvements that their capital will allow, and have so increased the productiveness of their land as to be truly public benefactors."

"Poor Norton will hardly have any chance of improving his little fortune in such a neighbourhood," said I.

The sergeant shook his head, and said that he had tried to explain to Norton that as industry is proportioned to capital, it must answer better to let the labour of a society like ours to a large capitalist than to split it into portions which could not yield so full an aggregate return ; but that Norton liked the idea of being a proprietor, and would listen to no evil bodings.

"If you were to go abroad, again, sergeant," said I, "what would you do for want of somebody to advise ? I suppose you found no foreigners so ready to look up to you as we are in your native village ?"

"My business abroad was not to teach but to learn," he replied, smiling. "Yet there were some who used to ask me questions by the hour together about the ways of my own country. It was the examination that I was thus led into that induced me to consider the reasons and rules of our public and domestic economy in the way which makes my neighbours here come to me for advice."

"What sort of people were they who used to

question you?" I asked. "Soldiers do not generally study these matters much."

"It is a pity they do not," replied he, "so much opportunity as they have of observing the ways of different countries. Those that I speak of were mostly soldiers, however; they were my companions in the hospital where I lost my arm. I was confined there many weeks, and a prisoner too; so that I was glad to amuse my thoughts by conversation whenever I could get it."

"You could speak Spanish, then?"

"I managed to pick up enough both of French and Spanish to make myself understood. If I had not, I should have been forlorn indeed, for not an Englishman was in that hospital but myself. I think I hardly could have borne to lose my liberty, my limb, and all intercourse with my countrymen at once, if I had been unable to talk with the people of the place. As it was, it was sad enough."

"I have always wished," said I, with some hesitation, "to hear the history of that terrible time from yourself; but I never ventured to ask it."

The sergeant smiled as he assured me that I need not have scrupled, as it was a pleasure to him to go back to the remembrance of old times.

"I will begin with telling you, miss, how I got my wound. It was the first wound I ever had, though I had been often in the very thick of the fight. It was strange enough that on this particular day——"

Just at this moment the clock struck one. A

shade passed over the face of the old man, and he stopped short. Knowing his passion for punctuality, I started up with many apologies for having detained him so long, and promised to call on him one day for his story, which it really was no little disappointment to me to give up for the present.

Before I left the churchyard, I looked back and saw that, though he was late for dinner, the sergeant had paused to look once more into his old friend's grave.

CHAPTER V.

PAST, PRESENT, AND TO COME.

A LARGE portion of the newly-inclosed land belonged to Sir Henry Withers, whose plantations were celebrated in verse, as we have seen, in company with Mr. Malton's fields. Sir Henry had had a world of trouble in laying his plans about these plantations; for, in addition to the discontents of the people about the common, he had met with opposition from other quarters. Every arable cultivator grumbled over Malton's pastures and Withers's woods by turns. Every shepherd looked upon every spot occupied by a tree as so much food taken from his flock. Sir Henry's bailiff himself could not bear to see a

rood of ground that was worth any thing for other purposes devoted to planting, and was continually offering his advice as to how much should be taken in, and how large a sweep the fences should make. If his master had followed his advice, his plantations would not only have made a very extraordinary zig-zag patchwork, but the expense of fencing round so many odd angles would have exceeded the saving in good land ; to say nothing of the advantage lost to the trees planted in a poor soil by having none of the protection of more flourishing neighbours. Sir Henry and his forester laughed together at the idea of having his plantations look like an assortment of pincushions, and of rearing a mile of fence where half a mile would do, for the sake of saving a few acres more for the plough. These two carried their point against all the little world of Brooke ; and the future woods were appointed to sweep round the foot of this hill, to retire into yonder hollow, to wave on the top of that healthy slope, and to shelter from the north winds all this expanse of corn-fields. It was a delight to the imagination to picture what they would be a hundred years hence, when hanging woods would ornament a landscape at present bare and barren.

It was partly this pleasure, and partly the activity of the scene, which made us love to watch the process of planting. The inclosing was the first work ; and we were for some time in dread that stone walls would be the kind of fence fixed upon, as the soil was too poor for a quickset

hedge, considering the great extent to which it must have been carried; and fences of furze and larch would have required too much attention in the neighbourhood of such large flocks of sheep as Mr. Malton's. Sir Henry, however, could not tolerate the idea of stone walls any more than ourselves, and determined to construct an earthen fence which might last for nine or ten years, by which time the thinnings of the plantations might provide a substitute. A ditch was dug, sloping outwards but presenting a straight cut of a foot and a half next the plantation, on the verge of which was raised a wall of sods, three or four feet high, round the top of which ran a single bar of paling.

The next operation was to drain those portions of the soil which required it—a trouble and expense which, though great at first, becomes less and less burdensome every year; since, if the drains are properly kept open and scoured, so that the water may remain pure enough to nourish the trees, it will be gradually absorbed by them, so as to turn a swampy into a firm soil. The marking out of the road and paths was done at the same time with the draining, as one ditch served to drain the road on one side and the plantation on the other. This part of the work was the most agreeable of all to lookers-on, and to a man of taste like Sir Henry, who saw how much of the use and beauty of his woods depended on this part of his plan. He pointed out with delight how air would be conducted into the recesses of the groves by these pathways; and how

the road, now barely marked out with the spade, would soon become a dry green sward, where the fellings of the woods would be hereafter collected, and where their owner might go to and fro to watch how his forest nurslings throve.

Our next curiosity was to know what trees Sir Henry meant to plant the most of. There were to be oaks, of course; but a far greater proportion of larch. "Larch! ugly, mean-looking larch!" we exclaimed; and went on to rail against its appearance when planted in small patches, or on the ridge of a hill, or sloping away from the wind. But Sir Henry told us that if we had seen forests of larch we should have had a very different idea of its beauty. He had been in Switzerland; and he described to us the sublimity of the woods there, where the mountains are clothed with larch as high as any vegetation can stretch, and where the tender green of its young shoots in spring is as beautiful as its sober autumn shade is grand. To comfort us under our complaints that we were never likely to look upon Swiss mountains, he told us that we need go no farther than Scotland to see what a forest of larches might be made. He owned, however, that he had regarded use more than beauty in his choice of the larch. This tree grows better on exposed and poor soils than in rich and sheltered situations;—not so fast, certainly; but its timber is of a better texture, and it is free from blight. The oak and ash, therefore, were planted on the best parts of Sir Henry's grounds; and the rest was given up to

the larch, which was expected to grow more rapidly than all the trees of the forest besides, to furnish wood as tough and durable as that of the oak, and moreover to improve the quality of the ground as rapidly and effectually as could be done by any other process. By the annual casting of its leaves, the larch enriches the soil beneath as with a regular supply of manure. The coarse heath gradually disappears, and the finer grasses spring up, till a larch wood becomes, from being a barren moor, a pasture land carpeted with white clover: a wonderful change to take place without any assistance from human labour beyond that of putting larch plants into the ground. The plantation may be used as pasture without injury to the young trees, after a ten years' growth; and hence arise other advantages,—shade to the flock in summer, warmth in winter, and shelter from the storm. What wonder that Sir Henry planted many larches!

Few rural employments are more interesting to the by-stander than that of planting. I have stood for hours with my brothers, watching the people at their work. First a labourer took off with his spade about a foot of turf, and laid it aside, while he dug the pit, and broke the clods, and loosened the soil near. Then his wife, if he had one, or his boy, placed the plant, just brought from the nursery, in the earth, and spread the roots abroad in their natural direction, taking especial care not to twist or bruise the tender fibres which draw nourishment from the soil. Then the pit was filled up; the earth being

first gently sprinkled over the roots, and afterwards turned in and trodden down. The turf was next cut in two with the spade and laid upside down on each side of the plant, so as to meet round its stem. The purpose of reversing the turf is that the nursling may not be affected by drought, or injured by the growth of grass or weeds close beside it. We were sure never to be long at any one spot without seeing either Sir Henry or his forester, who were always going their rounds among the labourers. They told us that no one thing is so much to be dreaded in the work of plantation as slovenliness in putting the plants into the ground; and as it was impossible to convince the labourers of all the mischief of bruising or twisting the roots, there was nothing for it but keeping an eye upon them continually, to see that they did not make more haste than good speed. For this reason, planting was not in the present case, as in too many, done by contract; but even here, where the labourers were paid by the day, they were apt to grow impatient and think it foolish to fiddle-faddle about the root-fibres of a tree as carefully as about the tender organs of an infant. They made many attempts, too, in order to save trouble, to bring more plants at a time from the nursery than they could set before night: but the forester having once found half-a-dozen covered over in a ditch during a frost, made such vehement complaints, that thenceforward the nurslings were removed as they were wanted and in security.

I began this winter by admiring Sir Henry's benevolence to future generations more than I saw reason to do afterwards. I imagined that he would reap none of the fruits of his present outlay of trouble and capital, and that all that he did in planting was for the sake of his children and his country. He did consider both. He was well aware of the value of an ample supply of timber to a nation like ours, whose naval resources can never be too plentiful, and whose magnificent works of art create a perpetual demand for the treasures of the forest. He was mindful, also, of the vast increase to the value of his estates which he might provide by planting his inferior lands ; but, with all this, he hoped, as it was fair he should, that his own revenues would be improved by the same means, perhaps before he had passed the middle of life. I was present one day when he was pointing out to my father the difference in his mode of planting two portions of land, and the comparative profit he expected to receive in a few years.

"These fifty acres, you observe," said he, "are not for pasturage, though you see two larches to one oak. Half the larches are to remain for timber trees ; the other half are nurses, and will be thinned out in five or six years."

"O dear !" interrupted I, "before they are large enough to be of any use."

"I expect they will pay me," he continued, "for the outlay on all these fifty acres. They would be worth little if we lived far away from any population but that of our own estates ; but

there is demand enough for bark, for poles, &c., to take off all I shall have to dispose of. The bark will sell for about half as much as oak bark; I suppose it will fetch from four to five pounds a ton. The quality of the wood is so good, that stakes and poles of it are in great request for gates and palings. The smaller sticks I may want myself; or if not, Mr. Malton or other farmers will be glad of them for supports for their sheep nets, when the flocks are eating turnips off the ground. They sell at about a shilling a dozen."

"You will pay yourself in six years at farthest," said my father. "Do you expect to make more or less of those other fifty acres where you plant larch only?"

"More in the long run, but nothing for ten years or upwards. I have not planted so close there, you see; so that there will be no thinning at the end of five years. The original expense of planting is less, of course;—about twenty shillings an acre, at the most. Then we must remember the rent of the soil, which is perhaps a shilling an acre."

"Then to this thirty shillings an acre," observed my father, "you must add the ten years' interest, and the outlay on inclosing; there are no other expenses, I think?"

"Not any. There are twelve hundred larches on each acre. I shall remove one-third in ten years; and it will be strange if the bark and timber of four hundred do not pay all the expenses we have mentioned, with compound inte-

rest. Then I shall have eight hundred trees on every acre, the very lowest value of which will be ten pounds ; and the ground will be worth four times what it is at present. It will be pasturage worth letting by that time."

"Then," said my father, "after having paid yourself, these fifty acres, which were a month ago worth a rental of only fifty shillings, will bring in ten or twelve pounds a year, and have five hundred pounds' worth of larches upon them. Upon my word, this is a pretty profit !"

"Consider, too," said Sir Henry, "that without costing me a farthing more, the thinnings of the plantation will add to my income at a continually increasing rate. I shall be able to employ more and more labourers every year :—not that I need tell you so ; but I put in this observation for your daughter's sake. She looks quite disappointed in me—disappointed to find that I look for any profit from the measures which will benefit my family and society at large. Have I guessed your thoughts rightly, Miss Lucy ?"

So rightly, that I blushed and my father laughed, while he assured Sir Henry that we none of us doubted his disinterestedness.

"What different ways there are of benefiting one's country and posterity, in different parts of the world !" I exclaimed. "In Canada, a landed proprietor would clear away as many trees as possible, I suppose, if he wished to do a patriotic thing."

"It is one of the most interesting employments I know of," said my father, "to trace how

the same principles lead men to directly opposite or widely different modes of conduct, according to circumstances ; and if men studied this fact a little more carefully than they do, the world would be incalculably happier than it seems likely to be for some time to come. If statesmen and legislators saw that usages and laws must be varied with lapse of time and change of circumstances, we should be freed from many useless institutions. If our men of power saw that what is beneficial to a country in one age may be hurtful in another, we should have a better economy and a wiser distribution of our wealth. If our people discerned the same thing, they would leave off complaining of new measures because they are not old, and railing against their best friends because the advice they offer would not have suited the condition of our grandfathers."

Sir Henry observed that he had heard far more said about what would have been thought of Mr. Malton's large farm a century ago, than what ought to be thought of it now. In the same manner, the wise men who study how the resources of the nation may be best managed and improved are called hard-hearted, because the measures they recommend are different from such as were necessary when our population was less numerous, when there was less competition in commerce, and a smaller demand for agricultural produce.

"There can be no surer mark of ignorance and prejudice," observed my father. "The

king of Persia is prejudiced when he laughs at a king of England for having only one wife ; and every Englishman who thinks the king of Persia wicked for having twenty, is ignorant. He does not know that the religion of the monarch allows the custom. Any one of our labourers would be prejudiced if he blamed an Indian for waste for burning a whole pine-tree at once ; and that Indian would show himself ignorant if he laughed at Sir Henry for spending so much time, and labour, and money, in planting trees, of which the Indians have more than they know what to do with."

"Any one such instance," observed Sir Henry, "is enough to silence for ever all objections to plans because they are new. I would desire no better instance of the variations introduced by time into the way of employing labour and capital than the one you have reminded me of, by your mention of Indian forests. There was a time when this island was as much overgrown with wood as any part of North America now is."

"What a different place it must have been then!" said I.

"Different indeed ! Vast forests extending over whole districts ; the climate as cold as now in the north of Russia ; (for countries in our latitude become temperate only in proportion as they are cleared ;) wolves abounding in every wilderness, and swamps spreading in all directions, to the great injury of the health of the savage inhabitants,—such was Great Britain once."

“ Have swamps any necessary connexion with woods ?” I inquired.

“ With untended forests, where no care is taken to prevent them. A tree is blown down across a rivulet, and forms a dam. The water, stopped in its course, diffuses itself over the neighbouring ground, and loosens the roots of other trees, and, by becoming stagnant, poisons their vegetation. These other trees fall, one by one, and form other dams ; and thus the destruction proceeds, till what was once a forest becomes a bog.”

“ This is the reason, then, why trees are found buried in swamps ?”

“ Certainly ; and we know it not only from the fact of trees being so found, but from there being actual instances of such transformations of a forest into a swamp at the present time, in Invernesshire, and some other parts of Scotland. Now, what would a wise landed proprietor do in such a state of the country as this ?”

“ The very reverse of what you are now doing,” said my father. “ He would clear as much ground as possible for cultivation, putting the wood out of the way as fast as it was cut. He would build with it, burn it, and encourage every body about him to use it for all the purposes of life to which it could be applied. He would encourage pasturage, because cattle are scarce in proportion to the scarcity of open ground. These cattle, continually increasing under the care of man, would wander into the woods, and, though they could not injure large

timber trees, would prevent the young plants from coming up, and thus prepare for the decline of the forests."

"If things proceeded in their natural course, the face of the country would be wholly changed in a few centuries,—the hills being bleak and barren, and the vales swampy; the latter having become unfit for the residence of man, and the former an unsheltered and perilous pasture for his flocks. What would a wise landed proprietor do now?"

"He would hang woods on the summits of the hills to protect the herds grazing on their slopes," replied my father. "He would cut trenches in the valley, and, as an effectual drain, would plant the hollows the first moment that their soil would bear the process. Under this management, the high grounds would become fertile, and the bogs would be converted into firm, rich, vegetable soil, ready to repay the labours of the plough."

"Then if you owned the downs of our southern counties," said I, "or the bogs of Ireland, you would plant and drain and plant again?"

"I should, and as much for my own profit as for the general good; for the price of timber rises, of course, in proportion to its scarcity. Now you see how different is the application of labour and capital in these two states of a country. In the one, labour is applied to banish, in the other to create, woods. In the one, cattle are permitted to destroy the young timber; while in the other every tender shoot is pro-

ted at an expense of trouble and money. In the one, growing wood is as little valuable a part of the proprietor's capital as the stones which encumber Mr. Malton's new fields, and of which he can only make the meanest of his fences; while in the other, it is the resource on which the proprietor mainly relies for the stability of his fortune, not only for the income it brings, but for its power of increasing the productiveness of his pasture and corn lands."

"And do you believe," said I, "that there are any so stupid as to oppose a different application of labour and capital in these two cases?"

"Not in so clear an instance," replied my father; "but they will not follow the precedent in cases very like it. Can you fancy a family of natives, living, some centuries ago, in a wattled hut in a wilderness of Cumberland, visited every winter's night by wolves, every spring season with agues, crying out in dismay at the proceedings of a rich neighbour to clear the ground? They would exclaim against having their old customs broken in upon, and would talk of the pleasure of gathering acorns for supper in the glades at sunset, and of their hunts, and of the freedom of their wild life. If their neighbour represented to them that acorns had long been becoming scarce from the disappearance of oaks in the swamps; that their children had been swept from their side by diseases belonging to the locality; and that wild beasts were increasing so fast, that there seemed a probability of the hunters soon

becoming the hunted, these new notions would only increase their discontent. If he offered to supply them with certain quantities of grain and meat in exchange for wolves' heads, they would complain of the degradation of obtaining their food by rendering service instead of the dignified independence of picking up acorns or digging roots out of the soil. They would complain that he had injured them by fencing in ground where the boar used to stand at bay; and if he attempted to shew them the impossibility of restoring the forest and the climate and mode of life to what they were a hundred years before, and the necessity of making some provision for their altered state, they would, instead of listening, tax him with all the distresses and inconveniences which had been prepared before he was born.—Now, Lucy, can you find a parallel case to this?"

"Very easily," replied I, "Mr. Malton is the rich neighbour, and old Williams was one of the lovers of the old paths; and if you had told us of one who retired back farther into the swamp and built his hut on the sinking trunks of the fallen trees, I should have thought you were prophesying of Norton."

"Let us bode him no ill," said my father, "but rather hope that he will plant his foot on firm ground, whatever we may think of the position he has chosen."

"I can scarcely imagine," said I, "that any would be found to object to the second process Mr Henry described. The shepherd, striving in

vain to win his way against the snow storm on the uplands, in search of his perishing flock, would surely bless the hand that planted woods to shelter his charge?"

"Even he," said my father, "would pluck up every sapling if he dared, for shepherds are well known to grudge every foot of soil on which their flock cannot browse."

"Observe the fact," said Sir Henry. "Are not my pheasants lampooned before they are hatched? Is not every larch in all these acres looked upon as a meal taken from a half-starved cow? When the shepherd finds his flock safe under the shelter of a full-grown wood, he will be reconciled to the planter; and not till then: and if any one of my neighbours should live to rest his aged form on his staff in the noonday sun, and watch his grandchildren, among a hundred labourers, felling wood on this spot, he may look on my grave as he creeps homewards, and sigh to think how he once misunderstood my intentions; but I must not expect this justice in my lifetime."

"You may," replied my father; "and if you are spared to a good old age, you will witness as total a change in the views of our discontented neighbours as in the aspect of this waste or the condition of our village."

Sir Henry pointed to the temporary dwellings which had been erected for the troop of labourers who had come from a distance to work under his forester, (there not being an adequate supply

of labour at Brooke for the new demand,) and said,—

“When that row of sheds shall have grown into a village, and when the axe and mattock shall be heard in the woods throughout the winter's day; when the timber-wain shall come jingling down the slope, and the sawyers and woodmen be seen going and returning early and late, my purposes will be answered, whether I live to see their fulfilment or not.”

CHAPTER VI.

SERGEANT RAYNE'S STORY.

I OFTEN passed an hour with the sergeant in his neat lodging; and if I went only to inquire after his health, or to ask some question which might be answered immediately, I frequently stood chatting till my brothers came to see what I was about. They, however, were generally my companions, for they loved, like other people, to hear the entertaining stories of battles, sieges, and shipwrecks, and the sadder accounts of the suffering and death attendant upon war, which our friend could relate. As he was as regular in his habits as when subject to regimental discipline, we always knew when we

should find him at home. At a certain hour he rose and breakfasted; at a certain hour he took down his hat, hung it on a block and brushed it, and put it on sideways with a soldier-like air, and the people at the Arms knew what o'clock it was by the sergeant's taking his seat under the elm or beside the fire, according as the weather might be. Moving with the sun to the churchyard bench, as regularly as the shade on the dial, he would have been supposed ill or dead if a labourer returning through the stile to his dinner had missed him on a fine day. His landlady whispered to us that he was rather a particular old gentleman, though the most good-natured in the world when not put out of his way; and, indeed, if anything ever did make him look sour, it was his dinner not being ready to a moment. He did not care what was provided for him: he preferred a crust of bread at one o'clock to a goose at two. He could not have told anybody an hour after dinner what he had been eating; but if kept waiting five minutes, he could not recover it till the next morning. His hostess had half a dozen little children, and he was as kind to them as if he had been their grandfather, but warned them of his awful displeasure if they entered his room during his absence. If they came by invitation, well and good; he would do anything to amuse them. He would sing, tell stories, show them pictures, and even play at blind man's buff; though, as he said, it was not fair play with him

as he had only one hand to catch the rogues with. Not a rough word was ever heard from him. I remember one of the little ones saying, "Show me how you will be angry if I meddle with your sword. Will you frown like Bonaparte in the picture?" "No," said another "he will stamp and speak loud, as he told us his captain did when he was in a passion." The sergeant snatched up his cane, and made his countenance so fierce in a moment, that the children did not know what to think of him. They stared at him in terror till he could not help laughing; and then, I dare say, resolved in their hearts never to set foot in his parlour without leave.

On the present occasion he exclaimed, as I entered the room with Frederick and Arthur,

"I can guess, Miss Lucy, what you and the young gentlemen are come for, and I am happy to see you. You want to hear the little story I promised you; and you shall be welcome to it."

"I hope you are not busy?"

"Not at all. You are come just in right time. See, I had finished this chapter of my book, and I was putting the paper in when I heard your step in the passage."

"I want to know," said Frederick, who was remarkable for always going straight to the point, "I want to know where you were taken prisoner, and how you got home again, and how long it was ago. Lucy says you are going to tell her all about it, and that we may hear it too."

"To be sure you may, my dear boys; so sit down in the window-seat, and I will tell you. It was in Spain that I served at that time, you know, against the French. The armies had been drawing nearer to one another for a long while, and we all knew that there must be a terrible battle when they met. From the state of the roads, however, the whole army could not travel together, and when the van of both forces came in sight of each other, the rest were some miles in the rear. Both sides seemed much inclined for a skirmish, and there was pretty sharp fighting for the whole day before the grand battle. Often as I had been in action, I had never been wounded; but on this particular day, I felt a sort of certainty that I should be."

"Had you never felt this before any other battle?"

"I think not so clearly; but it may only be that what happened made me take particular notice, and remember very well what my feelings had been. I mentioned this foreboding to a friend, however, and so I suppose I was somewhat struck by it."

"And did he laugh at it, or call you a coward?"

"Neither the one nor the other, master. Very young soldiers, or men of hardened minds, may make light of the disasters of war, and call it cowardice to reflect upon them and prepare one's mind for them; but my friend was neither giddy nor reckless, and he knew me too well to fancy me a coward. We had fought side by side in

many a battle, and I have nursed him when badly wounded ; so that we were real friends, and not companions of the camp only. He advised me to ease my mind of all worldly concerns, and to prepare myself in other ways for whatever might happen, as he always did before a battle ; so I told him where to find what little money I had, and some letters I had written to my mother and another person——”

“Who was that other person ?” interrupted Frederick.

“Never mind who it was,” said I. “You should not ask such a question as that.”

“I have no objection, Miss Lucy, to tell you all. That other person was one to whom I had hoped to be married some time or other ; but she was not bound to me, for I told her there was little prospect of my returning home ; and if I did, I was afraid I should be very poor ; and were getting on in life, and I could not bear the idea of preventing her being happy ; so I begged she would not remain single for my sake. I had said this to her a long time before ; and my letter on this occasion was to tell her that I still loved her as much as ever ; and it was only to be sent in case of my death.—Well : we were very actively engaged all day without my taking any harm, while hundreds were falling round me. Late in the evening, when both parties were tired, and the fire slackened, I passed my friend as we were hastening forward for one other charge, and he called out ‘ So you are safe, after all ! ’ ‘ Safe after all,’ I replied, and

left him behind. A minute after, a shot struck my right arm while the enemy was pressing round us. I could not defend myself; I was separated from my company, and, of course, taken prisoner."

"In pain and alone, among foreigners and enemies!" I exclaimed. "How very miserable you must have been!"

"Not so much then as afterwards, Miss Lucy. You, who live in peace and quietness at home, can have no idea of the excitement of spirits there is in battle. One's heart is so full of courage, one's mind burns so with indignation at being made prisoner, and one has so much to think about, that there is no time to be truly miserable. I felt no pain from my wound at that time. I did not even know that I was wounded, till I found I could not raise my arm."

"Is that possible?"

"Very true, my dear, I assure you. I was hurried away, I scarcely know how, to one of the baggage-waggons, with many of the wounded besides: but they were all French; not one friendly face did I see. We were laid, one close upon another, on straw, and jolted away, over bad roads to a town where an hospital was established. Some of my companions were in dreadful pain, and their groans made me sick at heart. I now began to suffer much; but I wished above all things not to be spoken to; so I remained as quiet as if I were dead, and closed my eyes. If I could have shut my ears also, I should have escaped many a horrible dream

which has startled me since. Many a night, even now, I hear those groans and oaths; and the tortured countenances I used to see often in a battle rise up before me.—Before day-break we reached the hospital; and I was really glad of it, though I knew well enough what was before me."

"Did you feel sure that you must lose your arm?"

"Yes, master; I felt and saw that it was past cure."

"And were you much afraid about it?"

"I had thought so much and so often about the chances of such an accident, that I was not taken by surprise; and I was already in so much pain that I was very willing to suffer more for the sake of being rid of it. I sat beside a fire, while one after another of my companions was taken to the surgeons. At last, after waiting an hour and a half, they were going to carry away the man who lay next beside me; but he was a coward, it seemed, and begged to be left. They had no time to waste, and so laid hold of me, and were going to carry me; but I soon showed them that I had the use of my legs at least, and walked as stoutly as any of them to where the surgeons were. They made quick work of it, and scarcely made a show of asking my leave."

"But I suppose you would have given them leave?"

"I took care to do that. I held out my arm as soon as ever I saw the instruments."

"And how did you—how could you bear it?"

"A sturdy spirit will carry one through a great deal, master. I am not sure that I should have borne it so well in England; but I was determined no enemy should wring a complaint out of me. So I was as still as a mouse the whole time; grasping the back of a chair with my other hand so hard that the blood came out at my finger nails. One of the surgeons observed this; and I heard 'him say that I was a sturdy fellow and fit for a soldier."

"Then the pain was very, very great?"

"Much greater than anybody can fancy who has not felt it, or indeed than anybody can fancy at all; for it is not the sort of thing that can be remembered; and I dare say I have little better notion of it at this moment than you have. But such as it was, it was soon over, and then I walked away to bed. There I paid dear for the effort I had made; and I deserved it, for my bravery was not of the right kind and could not last long."

"Why, what happened?"

"When I was left alone, weak from pain, and still thrilling in every nerve, a tide of most bitter feelings rushed in upon me. Such a tumult of thoughts I never knew before or since. I hid my face under the bed-clothes, that nobody might disturb me; and there for an hour or two I suffered such agony of mind as I can give you no idea of. My pride gave way, and I felt myself as weak as an infant. In vain I told myself

that this misfortune was only what I had expected,—only what every soldier is liable to. In vain I called to mind the boasting in which I had indulged before I left home, and the wish which in my youth I had felt for the glory of one honourable wound. This recollection awakened others which subdued me completely.”

“What were they?”

“It happened that the day before I left this place to join the army, the old clergyman, who lived here then, invited me to the parsonage to say farewell. After talking cheerfully to me about my profession, he went out with me as far as the gate: and there he put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Remember, yours is a dangerous profession in more ways than one. You are not only liable to be sent early to another world, but to depart with false notions of glory in your head, and with pride and hatred in your heart.’ He pointed to the graves and went on, ‘See here what becomes of pride and enmity. There have been some of these whose hearts beat as high with various passions as yours will in your first battle. Now, all are humbled and all are still. So it will be a hundred years hence, with the youngest and the fiercest, with or against whom you are going to fight. They too will be humbled and stilled.’—The recollection of this circumstance now came back upon me clearly. I saw the church with the evening sunshine upon its windows. I saw the light flickering upon the smooth stems of the limes. I saw the graves, and also the venerable

countenance and gray hair of my kind friend. I heard his voice and the voices of the children at their play. I could almost smell the flowers in his garden, and feel the pressure of his hand upon my shoulder. I lay weeping for many hours, till by thoughts of home, of my mother, and of other dear friends, my mind was prepared for still better thoughts. My Bible was in my pocket, (for I took care to have it always about me,) and there I found a better sort of courage than that of which I had been so proud.—I was soon glad to take some notice of my companions in the hospital; and we managed to be very cheerful and to converse a good deal, as I told you, Miss Lucy."

"Did the friend you mentioned before know what had become of you? And what did he do with your money and your letters!"

"As he could learn nothing about me, he supposed that I was a prisoner; and he sent all that I had left behind me to my mother. It was not very long before she heard of me, but she had delivered the other letter I spoke of. I was sorry afterwards that I had ever written it."

Nobody ventured to ask why; but the sergeant has told me since that the young woman had supposed that, as he was so long absent, he would never return and had therefore married. She received his letter soon after she was settled, and was made very unhappy by it for a little time; but I am pretty sure (though the sergeant did not say any such thing) that she had not a very warm heart; or, at any rate, that it had

never been very warm towards him. He came back, he told us, a year or more before his mother's death, which was a great comfort to them both.

"I think," said Arthur, "that you must find the world grown very dull now, that there is no war anywhere in Europe. I wonder you are still so fond of the newspapers."

"Dull, Master Arthur! I wish such a kind of dulness may last for ever. It is all very well for people who want amusement to run about the village with news of a victory, and to help to make a bonfire and light up the houses. But if they happen to have a son or a brother killed or maimed for life, they may learn by experience what it is that thousands and millions are suffering. If they could take but one look at a field of battle, or an army in full retreat, they would wish for no more victories and illuminations. I hope I have as much of the spirit of a soldier in me as any man: and perhaps all the more for having suffered something for my country; but I do say that nations are only half civilized as long as wars are thought necessary. I say, moreover, that they who are foremost in war are farthest from heaven; for heaven is a land of peace."

CHAPTER VII.

GREAT CHANGES AT BROOKE.

BROOKE looked like a different place at the end of a very few years. In our own house, nothing remarkable had happened, unless it was the growth of my brothers, which was pronounced wonderful every time they appeared from school at Christmas; or that Billy Gray (now called William) had become quite an accomplished little footman. The improvement of his family had advanced as rapidly as his own; and one of the pleasantest changes visible in the place was that which every body observed in the outward condition of George Gray, his wife, and children.

George was a pattern of industry. Before and after his hours of daily labour he was seen digging, hoeing, planting, and pruning in his garden, his boys and sometimes his wife helping him; his eldest girl tending the cow; and the others mending or knitting stockings, or cleaning the house. Even the very little ones earned many a shilling by cutting a particular sort of grass in the lanes for seed for Mr. Malton's pasture land. Each with a pair of scissors, they cut the tops off about six inches long, and filled their sack in a few hours. Mr. Malton's steward paid them threepence a bushel for it, measured as hay. Their work was made easier by this grass being sown in lines along the hedges; and

it was well worth the little trouble this cost to secure a constant supply of the seed, which was greatly in request; the sheep being very fond of this pasture.

Gray's boys had all shoes and stockings now, and the girls were tidily dressed. The rent was regularly paid, and their fare was improved. How happened this?—from having ground, and keeping a cow?—Not entirely, though in some measure. The wages of labour had risen considerably at Brooke since the common was inclosed, as there was more work to be done, and the number of hands had not increased in proportion, though the population was already one-third larger than five years before. Gray felt the advantage of this rise of wages, and of having his family employed. He now wondered at his neighbours for letting their children be wholly idle as much as we once wondered at him. When he saw Hal Williams's little boys engaged in mischief, he observed to his wife that one might earn a trifle in weeding, and another in gathering sticks and furze for fuel, and sweeping up the dung and dead leaves from the woods and lanes for manure. But neither Hal nor his boys liked to work when they could help it, though Hal's wife set them a better example than her neighbours once expected of her. Many a mother shows an energy which never appeared while she was a giddy maiden. So it was with Ann: but it was a pity that she was ignorant of the ways of turning her industry to the best account, so that her desire for the comfort of her husband

and children did not do them so much good as she intended.

Hal once observed to Gray that he wondered he could spend so much time and toil on his bit of ground, such a trifle as it was.

"It is no trifle to me," said Gray. "The time I spend upon it is not great; and as for the toil,—a man with eight children must never grudge labour."

"Why now, Gray, how much time do you spend on your plot? I see you at work when I get out of bed every morning; and when I come back from the Arms in the twilight, I hear your everlasting spade behind the hedge."

"That is because I have no hours I can call my own but those before and after work. A couple of hours a day is the most I can spare; and surely it is worth that to be able to keep my cow."

"What is her value to you, do you suppose?"

"One time with another, she yields five quarts a day, and that is worth two days' wages a week, or perhaps three."

"Five quarts a day! That never can be. Mine never gave three all the time I had her."

"Nor mine while she fed on the common: but you know the keep is everything with a cow; and it is no more likely that a cow in the lanes should yield like mine, than that mine should yield thirteen pounds and a half of butter weekly, four months after calving, like a fine North Devon cow of Mr. Malton's that I was admiring the other day. But I call my cow

pretty well kept now, and she is worth the keeping. I manage to get many a good dish of vegetables for ourselves, too, out of my garden."

"But no fruit, I see, neighbour. I like to see fruit-trees in a garden."

"So do I, where there is ground and money and time enough; but it would not suit me. My cabbages would not thrive if the ground was shaded; and I could not raise fruit enough, or of a sufficiently good quality, to sell to advantage."

"But it would be a great treat to the children."

"My children must wait for such a treat till we grow richer. I am thankful enough to be able to give them bread and sometimes a bit of meat, instead of the potatoes we used to live on. Apples and gooseberries will come all in good time. Bread and clothes must be thought of first."

"And yet you managed to get a pig."

"Yes. I knew, if I contrived to buy one, I could easily keep it. So we made an effort to save in the winter, and in March I got a fine pig of four months. He was able to graze and eat cabbages and turnip-tops, and we have plenty of wash for him; so I hope, as he has thriven so far very well, he will be in fine condition for killing at Christmas."

"Will you be able to fatten him liberally?"

"I hope so. He shall have as much barley-meal as he can eat, if I can afford it; if not, pease must do."

"You will have a houseful of meat at that

time. Bacon in plenty, griskins, chines, cheeks, and I don't know what besides ; and hog's-puddings and lard for the children ! Why, you will live like an alderman's family for weeks. It is a fine thing to keep a pig !”

“ It is a great advantage ; and considering that, I wonder you don't try, neighbour.”

“ When I have eight children perhaps I may ; but we get on somehow as it is ; and I have quite enough to do, for I don't pretend to work as hard as you.”

“ No,” thought Gray, “ You make your wife do it instead, while you go and smoke at the Arms.”

Hal's cow had been sold long ago to pay his debts. It had been done during one of his wife's confinements, and it was bad news for her, when she got about again, that it was actually sold and gone. It was some comfort that they owed no money ; but it was a comfort which could not last long ; for she knew that milk is a dear article to buy, while it is absolutely necessary where there are young children.—It was grievous to see in a short time how poorly they lived. One thing after another was given up. They had long contrived to do without meat ; but now they could not afford beer, except a little on Sundays. Hal did not relish milk as when it came from his own cow, but took a fancy to have tea,—the least nourishing and most expensive diet a man can have. To indulge this fancy, the fire was kept in all day, the whole year round. There was an everlasting boiling, of the kettle in the

morning, the potatoes for dinner, and the kettle again in the afternoon. Upon this miserable diet they grew thin and sickly; they ran in debt to the grocer till he refused their custom; and to Johnson's wife for milk, till she declared she could not let them have any more. We were passing Hal's door one day, when one of the children entered with an empty pitcher, on seeing which his mother burst into tears. There was but too much cause for her grief. Her hungry children must be content with a drink of water with their crust of bread, for Mrs. Johnson could afford no longer credit. My mother could not bear to see the cravings of the little ones; and she promised to go back with the messenger to Mrs. Johnson and persuade her not to disappoint them for this one day, and to see what could be done for the future: but she declared that the tea must be left off if the milk was to be continued. The poor woman said that she was willing to live in the cheapest way, if the children could but be fed; but that her husband made such a point of his tea that she had little hope of persuading him to give it up.

We took the child back to Johnson's; and there we saw a cheerful sight. Mrs. Johnson was milking one of her fine cows, while the other two stood by; and her daughter was measuring out the milk to the various messengers from the village. There were Miss Black's maid, and Wickstead's boy, and Gregson's apprentice, and Harper's servant, and half a dozen children from the neighbouring cottages, having

their pitchers filled with the warm, fresh, rich milk. My mother smiled as she observed to me that the division of labour was not fully understood by our people yet, or they would have devised a better plan than having the time of a dozen people wasted by coming for the milk, instead of employing a boy to carry it round. It struck us both at the same moment that Hal's eldest boy might earn a share of the milk by saving the neighbours the trouble of sending for it. He might soon learn, we thought, to measure the milk and keep the tally.

"I hope we are in time, Mrs. Johnson," said my mother. "I was afraid your pails might be emptied before we came. You must fill this child's pitcher, if you please, and I will pay to-day."

"I assure you, ma'am," replied Mrs. Johnson, "it made me very sorry to send the boy away; but what can I do? They have not paid me these six weeks, and I cannot afford them a quart a day at my own expense. I have often threatened to send them no more, but I never had the heart to refuse them till to-day."

"You cannot be expected to lose by them, certainly," replied my mother; "but I am very sorry they are such bad customers to you. I am sure such milk as that is far better for them than the tea they make."

"Do you know, ma'am," said the busy Mrs. Johnson, as the milk went on spurting and fizzing into the pail, "I do believe that tea-drinking alone is enough to ruin a very poor family.

We tried it once, and fond enough we are of it still ; but though we might afford it better than some people, we now never touch it but on Sundays and particular occasions. Now, can you wonder that I refuse to give further credit to my neighbours, when I know they might pay me, if they chose to manage better, and to give up a luxury which I cannot afford ?”

“Certainly not, Mrs. Johnson.—What very fine cows yours are ! I suppose you are glad your husband did not dispose of the first you had, when he was tempted to do so ?”

“Glad indeed, ma’am. I was always fond of a dairy, and desirous of having one of my own. If you would please to wait a few minutes, I should like to show you and Miss Lucy my dairy. My husband has been making it larger and improving it very much, for I find it a profitable business now, and I believe my neighbours think it answers to get their milk of me ; for I could sell the produce of three more cows if I had them.”

“Perhaps we shall see you with a dairy of twenty cows one of these days, if our village flourishes.”

“No, ma’am. Three are as many as I can well manage now, and as many as we can feed. Our lot of ground is carefully managed ; and we brew at home now, and the grains come in very well for the cows ; so that we are at no loss, so far. But if we were to take in more ground, my husband would not have time to attend properly to it ; and we are particularly anxious that he

should not neglect his work, so good as wages are now."

When the milking was finished, Mrs. Johnson took us to the dairy. It was clean, cool, and in beautiful order. A range of cheeses was on a shelf, and they were to be sent to M—— for sale. The butter she made was sold to the neighbours. My mother understood the management of this most delicate part of household economy, and agreed with Mrs. Johnson that the habits of cleanliness and care which are necessary to the success of a dairy are most useful to young people, and cannot be more effectually taught than by making them assist in the management of cows.

"My girl was telling me, ma'am, how a neighbour wondered why her cow's milk was not so good as ours; and how, with all the trouble she took, her husband complained, and the children left half their breakfast in their basins. The thing was clear enough. She milked her cow into the first pail that came to hand, and let the milk stand in the heat and smoke of the kitchen, in pans that had been used for potatoes, or any thing else they might have had for dinner the day before. My girl told her she might take a lesson from the cow herself; for no cow will taste a drop from a vessel that has held grease. The very breath of the cow is sweet enough to show what care should be taken to keep her milk pure. There is nothing so disgusting in the way of food as tainted milk; and nothing to my mind, ma'am, so wholesome as fresh, rich

milk, as sweet as the new-mown grass. Do me the favour to taste some, miss, and I think you will say so too."

When we had finished our delicious draught, we took our leave of Mrs. Johnson, agreeing that it was certainly a good thing for her that her husband followed my father's advice about his allotment of land, as she seemed so happy among her cows that it was difficult to imagine how she would have lived without one.

CHAPTER VIII.

SMALL FARMING.

"SEE the results of the judicious application of capital," said my father, one fine spring day, when I rode with him and Mr. Malton round the thriving property of the latter. After enjoying the view of the manifold tokens of prosperity which surrounded us, we were struck by the appearance of a field which looked by far less flourishing than any we had seen.

"What is the matter here, sir?" said my father. "What have you been doing to keep back this field while all the rest have been improving?"

"Pray do not take this field for one of mine. It belongs to neighbour Norton; and I am

afraid that, cheap as he has bought it, he will find it a dear bargain."

"I feared," said my father, "that he would not have sufficient capital to keep his land in good condition."

"Look here," said Mr. Malton, "this next field is his too, and there he is among the labourers. You may know him now, poor fellow, by his shabby looks. Those labourers are mine, and they appear more creditable, every one, than he. And there is not one of them that does not live in a better house than that of his. That is his cottage yonder. What a tumble-down place for a landed proprietor to live in! Better call one's-self a labourer, in my opinion, and have plenty to eat, and a whole roof over one's head, than pinch and starve for the sake of owning a couple of fields."

"Yes, indeed. But how does it happen that your labourers are at work in his field?"

"Why, you see the thing is this. He cannot afford a team to plough his field, and he has not sheep to eat off the crop of turnips, (if he had one,) and to manure it; so he meant to let the land lie fallow. I thought this a great pity, so I offered to plough and sow it, if my sheep were allowed to eat off the turnips; by this plan he will have his land manured, and returned to him in a good state, while I shall have an equal advantage on account of my sheep."

"Surely," said I, "people who cannot afford a team and a flock of sheep should not attempt to farm?"

"To be sure they should not, Miss Lucy; and much less to have land of their own. And in these days, when tillage has been so much improved, it is utterly impossible that a man who has little money at command can bring his crops to market on the same terms with one who has much. You have no idea of the great expense of making land as productive as it can be made."

"I have heard," I replied, "that many noblemen and rich gentlemen, who are fond of agriculture, have lost thousands upon thousands of pounds in trying new plans upon their lands."

"Aye, aye; that is in trying experiments, for which we farmers are much obliged to them, I am sure. We look on while they are making the trial, and have the benefit of their experience. If they succeed, we adopt their plans; if they fail, we take warning. If the small farmers would look on too, they would learn a good lesson; they would see how impossible it is to make the most of land without money, or labour, which is money's worth."

"In these days," said my father, "when so much advantage is gained by the division of labour, no one man, and no one family, can do justice to a farm, be it ever so small. It is incalculable what is gained by substituting division of labour for division of land. In former times, Lucy, the proprietor or occupier of thirty or forty acres was thought a substantial farmer. He and his family performed all the requisite labour, even down to making his implements, except, perhaps, the plough. His rickety harrow was

stuck full of wooden teeth ; the harness was made of withy, or of horse-hair, twisted at home. The wicker baskets, the wooden spoons, the beechen bowls, were made by the men in the winter's evenings ; while the wife and daughters carded, and spun, and wove the wool of the flock."

" But was not the change from those ways to the present very gradual ?"

" Yes. The division of labour began in the towns, and farmers found the advantage of buying their utensils and clothing before they put the division of labour in practice in their tillage. They knew little yet of the advantage of providing a succession of employments on their farms, or of portioning out the work to the best advantage. The work of tillage all came on at once ; two or three teams were required for a short time, and then the horses were done with, and turned out to graze till harvest, and the plough was laid up till the following spring, and the men, after being excessively busy, looked round for something to do. Now one team suffices for the same quantity of land, as the crops are successive, and a much smaller amount of labour, continually employed, achieves more than under the old system of husbandry."

" But surely this is a division of time, and not of labour."

" I was going to add, my dear, that the two advantages can be combined on a large farm, while they cannot on a small one. Norton does what he can by arranging a succession of labour,

but its division is out of his power, while Mr. Malton practises both."

"You may see Norton," said Mr. Malton, "one day hedging and ditching, another time getting lime for manure, and then obliged to look after his few sheep while the land is wanting him; the ploughing, sowing, cutting, and threshing, all resting on him: while on my farm such of these things as ought to be done at the same time, are so done, while yet there is a constant succession of employments for men and cattle. You may see lime-burners, drainers, hedgers, shepherds, cowherds, hogherds, ploughmen, and threshers, all busy, helping on the grand work, and nothing standing still. We do not leave one piece of land neglected while we take care of another: every rood is improved; the waste brought into cultivation; the cultivated enriched, and used for one purpose one year, and for another the next. This is the way to make farming answer."

My father observed that it was a proof what could be done by the vigorous application of capital, when fallows were banished from some districts. Mr. Malton replied, "Our ancestors would scarcely have been persuaded that that was possible; and some folks abroad will hardly believe, at this day, that our best husbandry is found on our poorest soils. But it is a fact, and a glorious fact, because it shows what labour, and capital, and skill can do. If the land had been to this time in the hands of little farmers, this would not, and could not, have been done. What

little farmer would ever have covered his whole farm with marl, at the rate of a hundred or a hundred and fifty tons an acre? How should such a man as Norton drain his land at the expense of two or three pounds an acre? Can he pay a heavy price for the manure of towns, and convey it thirty or forty miles by land carriage? Can he float his meadows at the cost of five pounds an acre? It cannot be, you see, that any very small capitalist can compete with a large one."

My father observed, that convertible husbandry was quite out of the question on Norton's property.

"To be sure," replied Mr. Malton. "You see, Miss Lucy, it used to be the way for one man to own a certain extent of corn land, and another of pasturage; and, in those days, they did not see the advantage (which is a very important one) of making the corn land into pasture, and growing grain on the grazing land: and this plan can be pursued only by those who have large flocks, as well as a good deal of both sorts of land. Then, again, a farmer must grow a great variety of crops, and maintain all sorts of animals useful in husbandry, in order to make the most of every thing that is produced; for soil of different qualities produces different crops, and these crops feed different flocks and herds; and they must all change and change about continually."

"What has been your course here?" in-

quired my father, pointing to a fine piece of grass-land.

"A five years' course. First year, turnips—second, barley, laid down with clover—third, grass to cut—fourth, grass to feed—fifth, wheat. Next year, we begin with turnips again."

"I suppose," said I, "it costs a great deal to keep your flocks and herds, independent of their food?"

"More in one year than Norton has to lay out on his whole concern: and one had need have capital for this part of one's business; for the profitable management of live stock is by far the most difficult branch of farming. But see what capital and skill have done here too! It is a great thing that improved tillage has doubled the quantity of fodder raised upon any extent of soil; but it is a yet greater that double the quantity of animal food can now be sent to market as the produce of the same quantity of fodder."

"And is this really the case?"

"It is, indeed; and all owing to the attention paid to the breeding and rearing of cattle by those who could afford to try new methods."

"The improvement in the implements of husbandry," observed my father, "is not less remarkable; and this we owe to the large farmer."

"It is at our cost," said Mr. Malton, "that new and improved implements, and men to use them, have been sent for, from one end of the kingdom to the other. Some have sent their

men into distant counties or abroad, to learn new methods of tillage. What folly it is to suppose that little farmers can farm to the same advantage as people who can adopt all these improvements !”

“ If all our farmers were men of little capital,” observed my father, “ we should have much less variety of produce in the market, and should therefore be liable to famines, as in old times.”

“ I have often wondered,” said I, “ why we are free from those apprehensions of famine which disturbed our forefathers so often.”

“ It would have been well if they had suffered from nothing worse than the apprehension, my dear. Our ancestors cultivated little besides grain ; and a bad season cut off all their crops at once : while, at present, what is fatal to one crop, may not injure another ; so that our supply of food is not only more varied and agreeable, but it is no longer precarious. We can form no idea in these days of the intense interest with which harvest weather was watched three centuries ago.”

“ We farmers were not ridiculed then for grumbling about weather,” said Mr. Malton, laughing ; “ for we had the whole nation grumbling with us in a wet season or a drought.— There is another consideration which we have not mentioned. As small capitalists cannot wait for their money, the supply of corn in the market would be very irregular if it depended upon them. They must bring their corn to market and sell it at once.”

“Then I suppose,” said I, “that in plentiful years there would be too much, and in unfavourable seasons too little, if we had no rich steward, like Joseph, to garner it up, and distribute it as it is wanted?”

“Not only that,” said my father, “but there would be too much every autumn for the good of the farmers, and too little every spring, for the good of the people. It is always a pretty certain thing that as much of a good article as can be brought to market will be consumed; but the price, while it is plentiful, would fall so low as to injure the producer; while afterwards, when the people are in want, the producer would have nothing to bring to market. Thus it would be if all were small capitalists; but now, large capitalists, who can afford to wait for their returns, keep back their corn in plentiful seasons: for which those who are compelled to sell are much obliged to them; and the people are no less obliged to them for regulating the supply.”

Mr. Malton looked pleased at this acknowledgment of the obligation the community are under to large farmers.

“So you see, Lucy,” said my father, “that if it were not for large farming, our moors and morasses, and indeed all our inferior soils, would still have been barren: we should have been liable to frequent scarcities; our breeds of cattle would not have improved; and we should have no idea how prolific the soil might be made, or how incalculable a sum of human life may be sustained by it. If the people who rail against

the owners of large productive capitals could but be convinced of this, they would soon grow ashamed of their complaints."

"Perhaps so, father; but surely it is hard upon the small farmer to go down in the world in spite of all his labour; and it does not seem fair that he should be driven out of the market by his neighbours because he begins the world with less capital than they."

"Begging your pardon, my dear, that is a more foolish remark than I should have expected from you. When we reason upon subjects of this kind, it is not our business to take the part of one class against another, but to discover what is for the general good; which is, in the long-run, the same as the good of individuals. We are not now taking the part of the large farmers against the small (though Mr. Malton is riding beside us), nor of the small against the large (though we are full of pity for poor Norton); but the question is, how the most regular and plentiful supply of food can be brought to market? If it be clear that this is done by cultivation on an extensive scale, we ought not to wish for the continuance of small landed properties, but rather that their owners may apply their labour and capital where they will meet with a better return. We are all sorry for the little farmers, and nobody more so than Mr. Malton; but the more clearly we see that they suffer through a mistake, the more anxious we must be that the mistake should be rectified."

"I am sure," said Mr. Malton, "it gives me

great concern to see a man like Norton growing poorer and poorer every year; but I know that it is partly his own fault, because he must see that his mode of tillage can never answer. If I had his lot now in my own hands, I would serve him, not by doing anything to his two fields, but by employing him on good wages. In the one case the help I should give would be all at an end in a year or two; in the other, he would soon be in possession of the comforts of life, and might lay by a provision for his old age; while, at the same time, he would be serving me and society at large by giving up his land to be made more productive."

"I am aware," said I, "that an industrious labourer is a benefactor to society."

"And what more honourable title need a man desire?" exclaimed my father. "Is it not better to deserve this title, and to possess the comforts of life, than to starve on the empty name of a landed proprietor?"

"But is it not a hard thing," I persisted, "for a man who is born to a few acres to give them up? I do not pretend to justify Norton's ambition. He might have been content as he was; but it must cost a man a severe struggle to part with his fifty or hundred acres when his fathers tilled them before him."

"I have no doubt of it, my dear. Such a man should consider what his plan of life is to be. If he has only himself to care for, and a little capital in his pocket, let him remain upon his land, keep it up, and improve it by the saving of his

returns if he can. If he has not capital to do this, his duty to the public requires that he should not let his property degenerate. If he has a family to provide for, it becomes his duty to do his best for them—even at the expense of his pride, if need be."

"His pride should be," said Mr. Malton, "to maintain his children in decency and comfort; this is a pride worth having."

"After all," said my father, "it is not so much that a man loses his rank in these days by becoming a labourer, as that the employment of a labourer has become more honourable than formerly."

"There is one question more," said I, "that I want to ask; and it is, why there should be a scarcity in a bad season, even if all our farms were small? If, in other countries, there is more corn grown than is wanted, why should not we supply ourselves from them? Would not it be a mutual advantage?"

My father smiled as he replied,

"You have no idea on what a wide subject your question touches. If I were to tell you all the whys and wherefores on that question, we should not have done by dinner-time."

"If you are getting upon the Corn Laws," said Mr. Malton, "it is time I was wishing you good morning."

"Not till I have spoken to you about a little affair in which I want your advice," said my father. "I will not detain you five minutes."

While they were talking, I endeavoured to discover what there was remarkable in my question. It seemed to me the simplest thing in the world that if there was too much corn in one country and too little in another, the want of the one should be supplied from the abundance of the other. While I was meditating, my father called out,

"Come, Lucy, your horse is in a feverie as well as yourself, and we shall see you both fall presently, if you do not wake up. Mr. Malton says, 'Good day,' and we must make the best of our way home; so now for a canter."

We cantered till we reached the village.

Miss Black's window looked very gay at this time. She had been to M—— to see the fashions at the rooms of a milliner who had been to see the fashions in London. The caps and bonnets were of quite a new make; and there were smarter ribbons and flowers than I had ever seen at Brooke before. She had also another apprentice, and had lately enlarged her show-room.

"I wonder what has happened to Miss Black!" I observed. "She really makes a grand display now."

"A very good thing has happened to her, I fancy," said my father. "She has more customers, and those customers are richer. Those gay hats and caps came out of Mr. Malton's hedges and ditches, if you know what I mean by that."

I supposed he meant that some new families had come to settle at Brooke on account of the

demand for labourers ; but I should not have thought they were people who could spend their wages in millinery.

"Nor are they," said my father, in answer to my doubt ; "but they spend their wages in bread, milk, beer, meat, and groceries ; and, at the same time, cottagers who lived on potatoes formerly are rising in the world, so as to be able to afford themselves these comforts. Their custom helps on the butcher, the baker, and the publican ; and Harper told me the other day that he sells twice the quantity of groceries that he did five years ago. So the wives and daughters of these tradespeople can afford to dress themselves in Miss Black's fashions ; and thus Mr. Malton's money comes round to her."

"I wonder where it will go next !"

"It is well spent, I believe ; for Miss Black is a very good woman. I can tell you that some of her savings are in the hands of a brother at M——, who, by increasing his capital, is able to improve a very promising manufacture."

"So she receives the interest, and increases her capital every year, I suppose, till she will have gained enough to enable her to leave off business. This money seems to have done good in every stage of its progress. I am very happy to see Gray's children, for instance, well shod and coated. I like to observe the bustle in Harper's shop, and his daughters look very well in their better style of dress. It is pleasant to see Miss Black prospering, especially as it is a sign of the prosperity of the place. This money is

not given away by Mr. Malton either ; it brings him in more than he pays away."

"All this stir, therefore, my dear,—this prosperity, which strikes you so much,—is pure gain ; and it proceeds from the inclosure of Brooke common."

CHAPTER IX.

GREAT JOY AT BROOKE.

SIR H. WITHERS'S eldest son had been travelling abroad for the last three years, and was at this time expected to return to his native village. What he was as a man, few people knew, as he had scarcely set foot in Brooke from the time he left school ; but as a boy, he had been a great favourite among his father's tenants and dependants. He had been high-spirited, and at the same time good-natured ; fond of the country and its sports, and yet as gentle in his manners and polite in his deportment as if he had lived in a court. So, at least, the old folks said who remembered him best ; and the younger ones had also a strong impression of the freedom with which he used to join in their games, or see that there was fair play in their battles, or beg a pardon for them when they had offended at home, or trespassed in Sir Henry's grounds. There was now a general feeling of wonder as to what

he would be like, after years spent in a foreign country, where he could neither hear the language nor meet the society of his childhood and youth.

His approach happened at a very good time for the neighbours who met under the elm. News had been scarce for some weeks. Parliament was not sitting ; the member for M—— was alive and well ; nothing extraordinary was going on in the village. Nobody had died for some time : there was not a single courtship, except Gregson's, which had been so long a settled matter that nothing more could be said upon it till the furnishing should begin. Miss Black's spring fashions had ceased to be new and striking, and Harper's pretty daughters had been admired or censured for their finery till the subject was worn out. In a happy hour, the steward was empowered to proclaim the arrival of Mr. Withers in England, and the expectation of his family that he would visit Brooke in a fortnight or three weeks. How many pipes were smoked, how much ale was drunk at the Arms that evening ! Even Gray indulged himself for once. He put by his spade and enjoyed his draught and his neighbours' conversation under the elm. All were pleased ;—some with the hope of profit, and others with the prospect of a general rejoicing ; and some with both together. Carey remembered that every man in Brooke would require an extra shaving that week, and that most of the children would probably have their hair cut. The butcher had secret hopes that a

bullock would be roasted whole; and the baker, who had lately made some experiments in confectionary, warned his wife to purchase her sugar and currants before the price should rise. Wickstead reserved his best tap for the important day, and Miss Black sent an order to M—— for an extraordinary supply of ribbons on sale or return. These important affairs settled at home, each gossip was at liberty to enjoy himself at the Arms, and many a shout of merriment was heard that evening, even as far as our white gate.

There was one person in the village who said little on this occasion, but who perhaps felt more than anybody else. Nobody observed her but myself, because no one besides suspected what was in her heart. Our gardener's daughter, Maria, was a great favourite in our house. She was a young woman of twenty-two: a good daughter and sister,—industrious and humble, useful to everybody, liked by everybody, and never seeming to think about herself. She was not particularly pretty, nor particularly clever; and her manners were so quiet that no stranger would discover at a glance why she was so beloved. But those who saw how she kept her father's house in order, how she trained her younger sister, how she attached her little brothers to her, could easily understand why her father drew up when he spoke of his Maria, why my mother placed confidence in her, why the young men of Brooke looked up to her with respect, and their sisters regarded her with affection. When Mr. Withers went abroad, he took with him, as his

servant, Joe Harper, the eldest son of the grocer. Joe Harper was a steady young man, in whom Sir Henry could perfectly trust. It was thought a great thing for Joe when the situation was offered him, and everybody was glad of it but one person, and that person was Maria. I found this out by accident, and therefore I never told any one,—not even my mother,—of the discovery I had made. It happened on the very morning that Mr. Withers, his tutor, and Joe were to depart, that I went down to the gardener's cottage to speak about some plants. I supposed that I should find him at breakfast; but breakfast was over, and he was gone to his work. As I drew near the cottage door, Joe ran out, leaped the gate, and hurried down the road. I saw Maria leaning over the table, her face hid in her apron, and apparently in an agony of grief. The cause could not be mistaken. I went back as softly as I could, and I believe she never knew that any one had witnessed her distress. There was never any other trace of it till the present time. She was always cheerful in her spirits and active about her business, and so sober in her manners, that no one set about guessing whom she would marry, and no reports of the kind were heard concerning her.

I could not help watching how she would receive the tidings of Mr. Withers's approach. I saw her the first evening with a cheek somewhat flushed, and a manner a little hurried, standing at the white gate, waiting for one of her brothers.

whom she had sent after the steward to make particular inquiries. For some days she was not quite herself. She forgot two messages which my mother left for her father, at two separate times: and some trifles went wrong in the cottage in the course of the week which made my mother go so far as to inquire of Maria whether she was quite well. Before the end of the three weeks, however, she had recovered her self-possession, though I could trace an anxiety in her countenance which made me suppose that the matter was not quite settled between Joe and herself.

Sir Henry Withers and his family generally spent the spring months in London, and returned to their country seat in May. This year their absence had been prolonged, that Mr. Withers might join them in town, and the whole family arrive together. Monday, the 3d of June, was the happy day.

Early on that morning the church-bells clanged in the steeple, and the triumphal arch spanned the road, decked with pictures, garlands, and gay hangings of all sorts. The band of music which was to animate the dancers in the evening had already arrived from M——, and was stationed under the elm ready to strike up, as soon as the approach of the carriage should be announced. The children were dressed in their holiday clothes, and the fathers and mothers in their smartest and best. The bullock was prepared for the roasting, and the bonfire for being kindled as soon as

night should come. Never was such gaiety seen at Brooke, since the occasion of Sir Henry's marriage.

The Maltons called for us soon after breakfast, that we might walk through the village together. Maria was at work beside her open window, where she could hear the hum from the street, and where, I suspected, she was listening for the music.

"At home, Maria, on such a morning as this!" exclaimed my mother, as Maria ran to open the gate for us. "Why are you not in the village, like everybody else?"

"I am going by and by, m^a'am; but my father is gone with the children, and so I thought I would stay behind for an hour or two."

"Twelve is the time, remember," said my mother. "You must not miss the sight, for I do not know when you will see such a rejoicing again."

I observed a tear in Maria's eye as she turned into the cottage, and I thought to myself, "She will not be there." Nor was she.

When the carriages drew near, Joe Harper was not to be seen. He was not on the first—nor the second. His anxious father made bold to inquire. He was on horseback behind, safe and well, was the reply. His father, his sisters, looked and looked in vain, while the carriages slowly proceeded past the church and along the street. The music, the shouts, the ding-dong bell, the waving of hats, and shaking of hands, were all lost on the Harpers, who were watching

for their long-absent son and brother. At length he came, at full gallop, not along the high-road, but from a lane which led in a circuit from our house.

"Why, he forgets the way!" exclaimed his sisters.—I knew better, for I understood where he had been; and I said to myself, "Now Maria is happy."

The villagers dined under the trees in the park; and a beautiful sight it was. We joined Sir Henry's family in their walk round the tables, and helped to ascertain that all were served and all were happy. Joe Harper presided at one of the tables by his master's desire; and very attentive he was to all near him. Maria was seated far off at another table with her father.—When the roast beef and plum-puddings had been dispatched, the healths of the family drunk, the few speeches made, and "God save the King" sung in full chorus, a signal was given for clearing the tables that the dancing might begin. The old men seated themselves with their pipes under the trees; the elderly women chatted and kept the children in order, while the young folks tripped it away on the grass. Everybody danced at first who could not plead age and rheumatism in excuse. Mr. Withers himself, my brothers and I, and everybody, danced: but afterwards people were left free to do as they liked; and then I observed that Joe had disappeared, and that Maria was nowhere to be found. Joe's master inquired; Maria's father looked about, but nobody could wonder what had be-

come of them in such a crowd ; and so it did not matter. I could have told ; for I saw two people stealing away into a shady walk just before sunset, and leaving the bustle and merri-ment behind them ;—to enjoy something better, no doubt.

The village rang with the praises of Mr. Henry. He was so hearty, so kind, so much like what he used to be in all the better parts of his character, though so many years older in looks and man-ners. It was difficult to believe that he had been absent for so many years, for he had forgotten no person, place, or circumstance. He inquired after the old magpie, took down his angling rod with pleasure, and told his former playfellows about what he had seen since he left England. What was better, he went to visit old nurse Pitman, who was bedridden, and could not therefore pay her respects to him ; and early one morning he was seen on the dewy grass of the churchyard, reading the tombstones which had been put up during the last five years.

I admired all this as much as my neighbours ; but I liked Joe's constancy quite as well ; and I thought it equally to the credit of master and man that, having passed through many changes of country and society, they had brought home warm and faithful hearts.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT JOE HARPER SAW ABROAD.

"I HAVE a piece of news for you," said my father, one day after dinner.

"The news always comes with the dessert," observed my mother, smiling; "and a very pleasant dessert it is for people who live in a country village."

"When it comes after dinner," said I, "it is certain it can be nothing of supreme importance, because if it was, papa could not keep it to himself till then."

My father laughed, and said he had a good mind not to tell me at all, that I might see whether he could not keep a piece of good news to himself.

"Perhaps I know it already?" said I.

"That is impossible," replied he; "for I was the very first person to whom it was told, and that was less than an hour before dinner. But come; let us hear what you think it is."

"Nay," said I, "that would be letting out my secret: but if you will tell half, perhaps I will declare the rest."

"Well, then; the gardener tells me his daughter Maria is going to be married——"

"To Joe Harper," I instantly added.

"Who told you, Lucy?"

"I have known it these three years."

"Impossible, my dear. It was settled only this morning."

"Well; I knew that they were attached three years ago, and that Joe was constant, and brought back a true heart." And I told the story.

"I am glad you can keep a secret, my dear. But as to keeping a secret from you, that I am afraid is impossible."

"Nay, papa, I could not help seeing what was before my eyes; and I assure you I did not pry."

"No; you only laid circumstances together, and fancied a pretty love story out of them."

"And as true as it is pretty, papa. But I know nothing more than the fact of their attachment; so pray tell us all you can:—when they are to marry and where they are to live, and —"

"And *how* they are to live," added my mother; "for that is the most important question."

My father told us that Joe had received high wages while abroad; and had saved a considerable sum. It was not yet settled what he was to do with it: but he had the choice of two or three occupations, for any of which he was well fitted. He added that Maria wished to consult my mother about their plans.

My mother was ready to do anything she could for young people for whom she had a high respect and regard.

Joe Harper had the offer from his master of a small farm, if he chose to employ his capital in stocking it; but Joe had seen so much of the

danger and difficulty incurred by beginning to farm without sufficient capital, that he did not choose to venture. As for borrowing a little to add to his own and buying a very small property, as his father hinted that he might, he would not for a moment listen to it. He declared that he knew small properties to bring nothing but ruin, if they were the only dependence of the labouring man; and that if he had a legacy to-morrow of a farm of fifty acres, he would sell it immediately, unless a very pretty capital in money were left with it. This was said in the hearing of two or three neighbours who were curious to know what he had seen abroad that gave him such a horror of small properties.

“I have seen more misery than I could easily give you an idea of: and that, too, in spite of the most indefatigable industry. In Languedoc, a province of France, there are mountains which are cultivated to the very top, by means which no one dreams of here. But those who cultivate them are miserably poor, because each possesses a piece of ground which can never, by the best management, be made to maintain a family. I have seen people carrying earth in baskets on their backs to the top of a mountain which was of itself too rocky for anything to grow upon it.”

“That puts me in mind,” said the sergeant, “of what I have heard about China. The people there are too numerous for the produce of the land, and therefore many are in the lowest

depths of poverty. I am told that it is no uncommon thing there for a man to take possession of a ledge of rock which cannot be got at but by his companions letting him down by a rope from the mountain top. They let down baskets of earth to him, which he spreads to a sufficient thickness, and then sows his seed, and he and his neighbours share the produce. There he hangs, poor creature, in the heat of the day, toiling on the burning rock, to raise a quantity of food which would not be thought worth the trouble of a day's work in England."

"But," inquired a neighbour, "why do they spend their labour in any such way? There must be some better means of getting their bread."

"In such a case as that in Languedoc, of which I was speaking," said Joe, "the people are attached to the soil from its being their own. It is the custom there for families to divide the paternal property; and hence arises all this poverty. A man with a family may be well off with a farm of two hundred acres, and his two sons may do well enough on one hundred each: but when this one hundred is divided among five children, and then again among their five children, it becomes too small to be tilled with any advantage. And yet these young folks are deceived by the notion of having landed property; and they marry when the land is divided into roods, as readily as if they had a fine estate."

"Surely, Joe, that cannot be?"

"It is perfectly true, I assure you. I have

seen a family as much attached to half and even a quarter of a rood as if it had been a hundred acres."

"But that is downright folly."

"I can imagine, however, that it is hard to give up a bit of land that has been in the family for generations."

"But what happens at last?"

"They are obliged at last to sell, of course, and betake themselves to other employments. They are wise if they begin to sell soon enough."

"I have heard," said the sergeant, "that the reason why we find so many Swiss in other countries is, that the land is divided and divided again, in the way you describe, till the people cannot live upon it."

"In Switzerland," said Joe, "they do not commonly go on to the last moment before they sell. When a small farmer leaves his estate among his children, it is common for the eldest of the richest son to purchase their slips of land from his brothers and sisters, while they find a subsistence in other countries as soldiers, valets, tutors, and governesses."

"And why not in their own?"

"Because Switzerland is a poor country, and there is not capital enough in it to employ its population."

"I have often wondered," said one, "why we hear so much of Swiss regiments in the armies of other countries."

"And Swiss governesses are often met with in France and Germany, and even in England:

and gentlemen travelling abroad are frequently attended by a Swiss servant."

"They cannot love their country as other people do, or they would not leave it so readily."

"Indeed, you are quite mistaken there," cried Joe. "There is no nation upon earth more attached to home and country. Did you never hear of a certain air of which the Swiss are very fond, and which affects them so much when they hear it played in foreign lands, that it is dangerous to indulge them with it?"

"It was forbidden to be played in the hearing of a Swiss regiment," said the sergeant, "lest it should make the men desert. When they heard it, they cast themselves down on the ground, and some seemed half dead with the violence of their emotion,"

"How beautiful the music must be!"

"Not particularly so to us, any more than our "God save the King" is to them; but its power lies in the recollections it calls up. It is the air which sounds along the mountain pastures when the cows wander home in the evening: so, when the exile hears it, he thinks of the glorious mountains of his country, glowing in the setting sun. He hears the lowing of the herds: he sees the pretty cottage in a sheltered nook, and remembers his brethren and friends; and these recollections are too much for him."

"No wonder," said the sergeant. "But I believe they seldom banish themselves for life."

"No: they have a hope of saving enough to support them in their latter days, in their native

province. But it is a very hard case; and a man will bear much before he will submit to exile, even from his paternal estate. In one place, in France, I saw several horses with a man attending each, with pannier-loads of sea ooze which they were carrying many miles to manure their little fields. In another place, I saw women cutting grass for their cows by the side of the road, in harvest time: and this was in a rich country too."

"It is a pity there was no large farmer in the neighbourhood to employ them to better purpose."

"So I thought when I saw a stout, hearty man walking seven miles to sell two chickens, which would not bring him more than a shilling a piece, as he told me."

"Why, they would not pay the wear of his shoes and their own feed—to say nothing of his time and labour."

"But I cannot see, Joe," said his father, "why these people should not keep their bit of land, and labour for others also. It is what some of our cottagers do."

"They are above it, father, sometimes; and in most cases there is no work for them. It is generally found that those who have been brought up to a little estate of their own never do labour with heart and good will for other people. A man would rather dawdle about his own little farm, fancying that there is something for him to do, than let himself for a labourer. He will look for a hole in his hedge, he will carry earth

in a basket to the top of a mountain, he will walk ten miles to sell an egg, and he will be content with twopence a day on his own ground instead of half-a-crown on another man's, if he is born to call himself a landed proprietor. It frequently happens, however, that there is no employment for him elsewhere: for where these small properties abound, there are not many large: so that the population is, in those places, far too great in proportion,—not perhaps to the land,—but to its productiveness."

"Do you mean to say that there is this poverty wherever there are small properties?"

"By no means. In some districts the soil is so fertile that it repays most amply whatever labour is spent upon it. On the banks of certain rivers, and sometimes throughout a whole province, the little farmers are very comfortably off as long as they make their children provide for themselves by some other way than cutting the land into strips. But I think I may say that wherever capital is required to improve the soil, and wherever an estate is liable to be divided into roods, or half and quarter roods, such a possession is more of a curse than a blessing to the owner and to society."

"I suppose, Joe," said a bystander, "that you are as great an admirer of the law of primogeniture as any true Englishman should be? Of course you are, as you say so much against small properties."

"I do not see how the one follows from the

other," replied Joe. "On the contrary, I utterly disapprove of the interference of the law in the disposal of private property."

"Only contrast France and England," said the sergeant, "and see what opposite mischiefs the meddling of the law has caused in both. In France, there is a law of succession which divides estates in certain proportions among the children of a family, independently of the will of the father; and the consequence is, that the land is subdivided to such an extent as to discourage the improvement of agriculture, and to expose the nation to many of the ills Joe has been describing, except where the heirs are prudent enough to prevent the evil by private agreement. In England, the law of primogeniture has encouraged the accumulation of property in a few hands to a very mischievous extent. Our noblemen embellish their parks, and plant woods to a certain distance round their mansions; but the rest of the property generally suffers for the enormous sums spent on a part, and is left unimproved. There are far too many estates in this kingdom too large to be properly managed by the care of one man, or by the reproduceable capital of one family."

"The days are past," said Joe, "when every true Englishman must uphold the law of primogeniture."

"Well, then, Joe, letting the law alone,—I suppose you like the custom of primogeniture?"

"Little better than the law, neighbour."

"What security would you have then, against such subdivision of property as you have been groaning over for this hour past?"

"A security as strong as any law that ever was made,—the feelings of a parent guided by experience. Those feelings have been stifled too long by a law and a custom which neither principle nor policy can justify; but let them have fair play, and you will find that a man will be as unwilling on the one hand to prepare for his great-grandchildren being impoverished by the division of the land, as, on the other, to turn all his younger children adrift for the sake of enriching the eldest."

"What would you do, then, if you could govern in this matter?"

"I should leave parents to dispose of their property as they would, trusting that if they had a perfect freedom of willing, they would provide for their estates being kept of a proper size, even if they could not trust their children's prudence. There are many ways of doing this. There might be directions that the land should be sold, and the purchase-money divided; or a legacy of land left to one of the children charged with portions or annuities to the rest; or an injunction that the family should form a sort of joint stock company, and cultivate their property by a union of their shares. There are many other arrangements, some of which have been tried, and some have not,—every one being more just and politic than the institution of primogeniture."

"So much for the father, and his feelings and

interests," said the sergeant. "Now let the children be considered. Is it in the least likely that they should set their hearts upon making their family property yield as little as possible? Will they not be anxious to prevent their property wasting till it melts away before it reaches the third generation from them?"

"Besides," said Joe, "it never happens that all the members of a family have a mind for the same occupation. It would be strange, indeed, if all the sons, be they soldiers, sailors, professional men, or tradesmen, and all the daughters besides, should take a fancy to leave their employments for the sake of cultivating their land themselves; and if they either sell or let it, it may as well be to a brother as a stranger. O, depend upon it they have every inducement of interest and of principle, to keep the family estate entire, and need no law to oblige them to it."

"But Joe, the shares of rent or annuities would become so small in time by subdivision that it would have nearly the same effect as dividing the land, would it not?"

"They would be sold before they dwindled down so far," replied Joe: "you know there is not the same dislike to selling where the legatees do not live upon their shares as there is where they cultivate them with their own hands. There are examples enough in France of such family sales among prudent heirs to convince us that people here would find it their interest to let the landed capital of the family accumulate up to a certain point."

"If the Swiss had ever known what might be done by the accumulation of capital and by its judicious application," said a neighbour, "I suppose they might make their estates worth more than they are."

"Switzerland will not always be the poor country it is," said Joe, "for the people, primitive as they still are in many of their customs, have learned, and will learn yet more, what may be done by an economy of labour and a union of capitals. I saw one very pleasant instance of this. The little farmers keep cows in the pastures among the mountains, where there are no families near to buy their milk, or butter, or cheese; so that, some years ago, it cost them much labour and time to find a market for the produce of their cows. One poor woman, who kept some cows, six or eight miles from Geneva, carried the milk there every day for sale."

"Six miles and back again to sell milk! Why, she had much better have been dairy-maid to some considerable farmer who would have paid her good wages."

"To be sure. But they manage these things better now. There are large public dairies established, to which the neighbouring cow-keepers bring their daily stock of milk, which is returned to them in the form of butter and cheese; a certain quantity being kept back for payment to the owners of the dairies."

"That is a very clever plan, and a great convenience to the people, I dare say."

"Very great: but they would still be better

off, in my opinion, as labourers in the service of some great proprietor."

"We shall never make a farmer of you, Joe," said his father. "You used to have a great mind for it; but now you seem quite prejudiced against it."

"Not so, father, I hope. I think it one of the pleasantest occupations in the world; and if I had as much money as Mr. Malton, or even a good deal less, I should like nothing better than to be a farmer. The whole nation, the whole world is obliged to him who makes corn grow where it never grew before; and yet more to him who makes two ears ripen where only one ripened before. The race at large is indebted to the man who increases the means of subsistence in any way. My objection is to the imprudence of beginning to farm without a sufficient capital of land or money: and I do not see how a man that does so is more excusable than one who commits the same fault in trade."

"Well, please yourself, son. You have gained your little money honestly, and it would be hard if you might not do what you like with it: and you seem to have thought a good deal about prudence, and about different ways of going through the world honestly and comfortably."

"I should have travelled to little purpose, father, if I had not."

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT MUST COME AT LAST.

My father is a justice of the peace. Every body connected with one who holds such an office knows what interest arises out of its transactions to those who care about the joys and sorrows, the rights and liberties of their neighbours. It was not my father's custom to allow his family to form a little court before which a culprit might tremble, or a nervous witness be abashed. He received the parties who came to him on business in a hall, where it was not possible for the young people to peep from a door, or for the servants to listen from the stairs. My brothers were sometimes present at examinations, that they might take a lesson in what might at some future day become their duty ; and we generally heard after dinner what had passed ; but there was no gratification allowed to our curiosity in the presence of the parties.

On one occasion mine was very strongly excited, and I did long to gain admittance to the justice hall. I came in, one fine summer morning, from the garden, and passed through the hall, not being aware that any one was there. But there stood Norton with a gloomy brow, and Hal Williams, evidently in custody, looking the picture of shame and despair. He turned half round as I entered, to avoid meeting my eye, and pretended to brush his bare brown hat. My fa-

ther appearing, I made my retreat, and was obliged to wait till the afternoon for further satisfaction. If it had not been too warm a day for walking, I should have learned the event out of doors, for the whole village rang with it. Hal was committed for sheep-stealing.

Nobody could be surprised at this, who observed how the unhappy man had been going on for some time. My father had known him to have been guilty of poaching to a great extent the winter before; but there was never evidence enough to justify his being apprehended. The next step to poaching is sheep-stealing; and this step Hal had taken. The evidence was so clear, that it was useless to attempt any defence. Norton had lost a lamb in the night. Search was made in Hal's house; and three quarters of lamb, not cut up by a butcher, were found under some straw in his cottage; and the hide, bearing Norton's mark, was dug up from where it had been buried, behind the dwelling.—As soon as Hal went to prison, his drooping wife, and idle unmanageable boys became chargeable to the parish.

When Norton had finished the painful task of giving his evidence against an old neighbour, he proceeded to Mr. Malton's to do a thing more painful still. He went to offer his little farm for sale, and to let his labour where it would obtain a better reward than his two poor fields could afford. It was a sore necessity; and long was it before he could bring himself to entertain the thought. Even now, when he was quite deter-

mined, he could with difficulty nerve himself for the interview with Mr. Malton. He slackened his pace more and more as he drew near Brooke Farm; and just as he was about to enter the chestnut avenue, he remembered that he should be more likely to meet Mr. Malton if he went by the lanes; so he turned back and approached by the path which I have described as my chosen one. He stopped to watch a frog leaping across the road till he saw it safe into the opposite ditch. He plucked some wild flowers for his button-hole, but forgot to put them there, and pulled them to pieces instead. He lingered to watch the rooks as they sailed round the old elms: but their "caw, caw" which most people find rather a soothing sound, made poor Norton fidgety to-day. He was going to walk away when he heard the pacing of a horse's feet in the dust of the lane. He looked round and started to see Mr. Malton.

"Why, Norton, you are in a reverie," said Mr. Malton, who observed the start. "I suppose it is a holiday with you that you stand watching the rooks with your hands in your pockets?"

"It is an odd sort of a——." Norton choked at the word "holiday."

Mr. Malton's face was full of concern instantly. He dismounted and led his horse by the bridle while Norton walked beside him. Both were silent for some time.

"Have you anything to say to me?" inquired Mr. Malton at length. "You trust in me, I hope, Norton, as a friend?"

"If I did not, sir, I should not be here now. If I thought you an enemy or only indifferent, I would go into the workhouse before I would tell you a syllable of what is in my mind. I came, sir, to say that I find I must give up my farm; and I wish to know what you would advise me to do with it."

"I am glad it is no worse, Norton. I do not at all doubt that it is a sad pinch to you to give up a plan from which you once hoped so much; but you will be repaid for the effort, trust me. If you are steady in your determination, the worst of your difficulties is over."

"I don't think I shall change my mind again, sir. It is a sad thing to walk through my fields after crossing one of yours. One can scarcely get a finger in between your wheat stalks, I find; and mine rise as thin and straggling as thorns in an ill-grown fence. There is nothing but ruin in such harvests as mine are likely to be.—I should be glad to sell my land, sir, and my stock, either to you or some one else, and to have work under you again, if you have it still to give me."

"I will take your land and stock on a fair valuation; and as for employment, make your mind easy about that. One of my largest tenants is looking out for a bailiff, and I should think the situation would just suit you, Norton. I can answer for your being fit for it."

Norton's face crimsoned at the idea that he should not have to become a labourer on the ground which he had possessed. He had a good deal of pride left; and he was more obliged to his rich neighbour for his tenderness to this

weakness than if he had given him capital to carry on his farm.

"If you obtain this situation," continued Mr. Malton, who saw what was in his mind, "your cottage goes with your land; and you will find you have changed for the better, I assure you. My tenant gives his bailiff a very comfortable dwelling; and when you find yourself under a whole roof, with a mind free from dread and care, I think you will not repent the step you have taken."

"I believe it, sir; and I hope you will see that your kindness is not lost upon me. Now I have felt the value of gentle treatment in misfortune, I think I shall never be hard upon those under me. I am quite ashamed, sir, to think of the strange things that I fancied I might have to go through in giving up my farm. It all seems straightforward enough now, if I can but get this appointment."

When the mode of valuation, and the time when Mr. Malton should take the land into his own hands, were settled, the good man mounted his horse and trotted off with a kind "Good day to you."

As soon as he was out of sight, Norton stretched himself as vigorously as if he had been bent double for twenty-four hours. He returned home, forgetting to quarrel with the rooks, or to pull wild flowers to pieces by the way.

CHAPTER XII.

PROSPERITY TO BROOKE!

EDUCATION came in the train of other good things to bless the people of Brooke. There was much opposition at first from many who, having got through life so far without having learned to read, could not see why their children should not do the same. Regard to the persons concerned, however, carried the point where the principle was disputed; and when it was found that, in addition to the school being proposed by my mother and sanctioned by the clergyman, it was intended that it should be kept by Joe Harper and his wife, the opposition was in a great measure quieted. In a few months, it was hushed entirely; for the children, from seeming a set of little savages, began to look like civilized beings. They were no longer dirty, noisy, quarrelsome, and generally either crying or laughing. They could sit still without being sulky, and move about without being riotous; they could answer a question freely and respectfully at the same time: they could be industrious and cheerful at once. They could be trusted among the flowers in Joe's garden, and learned to do no harm if admitted into the house.

Everybody was surprised that Joe should expect to raise flowers in his little court by the school-house, when so many rough children were to be at play so near: but Joe said in their hear-

ing that he thought, when they knew how he prized his roses and pinks, they would take care not to spoil his garden. And so it proves. If the children lose a ball there, they ask for it instead of climbing the paling ; and no one is ever known to pluck a flower, though a good boy or girl often wears a rose given by the master or mistress as a reward.

Joe's house is the admiration of all who know what comfort is. The parlour has a boarded floor, which is sanded according to the old fashion. A handsome clock ticks behind the door. The best tea-tray and caddy stand on the mahogany table opposite the fire-place, and a footstool which Maria worked when a young girl, is placed under it. Joe has some books, as becomes a schoolmaster ; and they are of a kind so much above what any scholar of his own rank in the village has ever seen, that it has long been hinted that Joe is a very learned man. There is a Latin grammar and dictionary, and a book all in Latin besides ; or, if not Latin, nobody knows what it is. There are two books about the stars ; and a volume full of figures in columns, with a name so odd that nobody catches it easily. There are besides several volumes of voyages and travels, and with them a set which, from its title, was supposed to belong to the same class. It is called the Rambler ; but a neighbour, who took it down from the shelf one day, says there is nothing in it about foreign countries. There are works of a serious cast, as all would expect who are acquainted with Joe ; and to these Maria has added

a few religious books which were left her by her mother.—The greatest ornaments of this parlour, however, are some pictures of cities and other places abroad, which Joe brought home with him. The city of Florence is perhaps the most beautiful; but the most remarkable is a view of the bay of Naples, and mount Vesuvius in the distance. Maria is very proud of this last, as her husband saw with his own eyes the flames shooting up out of the burning mountain.

I never enjoyed a visit to the school-house more than yesterday, when I went to beg a holiday for the children on account of Mr. Malton's harvest-home. It was a pleasure to see the troop of boys and girls pouring out of the play-ground, and laughing and talking as they hastened to the harvest-field, while Maria and I followed to share the gaiety. Joe so seldom has leisure for books, that he remained behind, sure, on such a day, of having his hours and his wits to himself. What a busy scene when we arrived! The reapers stooping to their cheerful toil,—the elderly folks full of the pleasant recollections of many harvests; the lads full of gallantry, and the lasses of mirth! How complacently Mr. Malton surveyed the field, now following the reapers to build up the shocks, now crumbling a fruitful ear of wheat in his hands, now flinging a handful from a rich sheaf to some decrepit gleaner, or to some toddling little one who must have a share in the business of the day! What an apron-full Gray's children had gathered presently, and how kindly their father nodded to them when he

stuck his sickle into the sheaf for a moment to wipe his brows! How witty Carey was cracking his jokes within earshot of the Maltons and ourselves, observing that he was not in his right place in a field of wheat,—that as a barber ought to be where there are most beards, he thought he should adjourn to the oat or barley field! How Miss Black evidently admired, as I passed her door, the bunch of wheat-ears the children had stuck into my bonnet while I left it hanging on the hedge, and sat down in the shade! My mother is certain, from Miss Black's satisfactory nod,—as much as to say, "I have it,"—that artificial wheat-ears will wave in all bonnets next winter.

How goodly looked the last waggon, laden with golden grain, as it turned out of the field at sunset, leaving a few ears dangling from the sprays for gleaners as it creaked along the lane! Merry were the sounds from the train that followed. The songs which should have been kept for the harvest-supper began to burst forth already, the deep bass of a manly voice making itself heard above the shrill laughter of the children. This was truly the music of glad hearts.

We saw the long tables set out for the harvest-feast, and went through our annual speculations about how so much good cheer was to be consumed. As we were returning, my mother observed that it would be a fine moonlight night; and that she hoped the sergeant would come and report proceedings to us, as he would have such a lamp to light him home, however late he might

be. He left the table with the first sober folks who rose to depart, and looked in on us as he passed.

"Well, sergeant!" said my father, when he entered; "have you had a merry harvest feast?"

"Very much so, sir; but I am so hoarse with singing and talking, that I am afraid I can hardly tell you much about it."

"We will have a glass of ale," said my father, ringing the bell; "and then you shall tell me as much as you like, and leave the rest for Carey in the morning. We must drink prosperity to Brooke, and many a merry harvest home."

"There *is* prosperity in Brooke," said the sergeant, as he set down his glass. "If any of my neighbours pretend to doubt it, and point out one or two who take parish relief, or two or three who seem to be going down in the world, I shew them the cottages on the common, well thatched and clean white-washed, with their gardens behind them. I count numbers, and prove that our population has increased one-half. I shew them the school-house and the shops, so much busier than they used to be; and the new carrier's cart to M——, and all the improvements in the place."

"I am heartily glad to see, sergeant, that you relish these changes; for men at your time of life do not generally like them."

"It all depends, sir, on what the changes are. I am thankful that I have lived to see so many poor neighbours gathering their comforts about them; and I shall be all the more ready to go to

my grave if I see a fine, thriving race of young folks rising up to do more good in the world than I have done. And if they think of me sometimes, I hope they will remember," he continued, addressing my brothers, "that their old friend looked to them to fulfil his hearty wish of Prosperity to Brooke."

*Summary of Principles illustrated in this
Volume.*

WE have not advanced to any new principles of the science of Political Economy in the present volume. We have only exemplified some of the principles laid down in our last volume by illustrations of certain truths respecting a few particular modes of accumulating and applying Capital. These truths may be arranged as follows :

PRODUCTION being the great end in the employment of Labour and Capital, that application of both which secures the largest production is the best.

Large capitals well managed, produce in a larger proportion than small.

In its application to land, for instance, a large capital employs new powers of production,
—as in the cultivation of wastes ;

.... enables its owner to wait for ample but distant returns,—as in planting ;

.... facilitates the division of labour ;

..... the succession of crops, or division of time ;

..... reproduction, by economizing the investment of fixed capital ;

..... the economy of convertible husbandry ;

..... the improvement of soils by manuring, irrigation, &c. ;

..... the improvement of implements of husbandry ;

..... the improvement of breeds of live stock.

Large capitals also provide for the prevention of famine, by furnishing a variety of food ; and for the regular supply of the market, by enabling capitalists to wait for their returns.

Large capitals are therefore preferable to an equal aggregate amount of small capitals, for two reasons ; viz.

they occasion a large production in proportion ; and they promote, by means peculiar to themselves, the general safety and convenience.

Capitals may, however, be too large. They are so when they become disproportioned to the managing power.

The interest of capitalists best determines the extent of capital ; and any interference of the law is therefore unnecessary.

The interference of the law is injurious ; as may be seen by the tendency of the law of Succession in France to divide properties too far, and of the law of Primogeniture in England to consolidate them too extensively.

The increase of agricultural capital provides a fund for the employment of manufacturing and commercial, as well as agricultural, labour.

The interests of the manufacturing and agricultural classes are therefore not opposed to each other, but closely allied.

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